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Master's Thesis of Graduate School of International Studies

# Domestic Political Origins of Failed Summit Diplomacy between Trump and Kim

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## **Abstract**

Today, a significant military and economic potential of the United States is concentrated in Northeast Asia, and this is one of the main reasons for Washington's interest in maintaining stability and security in the region. The development of the DPRK's nuclear potential has radically changed the balance of power in the APAC, and has become a new security threat not only for American key allies, but also for the United States itself. The historical development of relations between the DPRK and the United States has shown that no matter how impressive the success in normalizing relations between the two countries is, a complete resolution of the problem of North Korean nuclear missile potential remains an unrealistic task. The period from 2017 to 2019 was marked by the creation of more favorable conditions for the conclusion of an agreement between the DPRK and the United States, but in reality, it did not work out. This study aims to investigate why these shifts in relations between the two countries have not received further development, and what role did domestic political factors play in this. Considering the complex relations between the US and North Korea, this dissertation first provides a historical review of US-DPRK relations and reviews the main successes and failures of the negotiation process between Kim Jong-un and Trump in the period from 2017-2020. Then the research analyzes the internal political factors in the United States and the DPRK and their impact on the negotiation process to resolve the North Korean nuclear missile crisis. The thesis shows that internal political factors in the United States and North Korea were the reasons for the failure of negotiation process between Trump and Kim.

**Key Words:** US-North Korean relations, domestic political factors, sanctions, North Korean nuclear missile potential, negotiating process.

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## 초록

오늘날 미국의 군사적, 경제적 잠재력은 동북아시아에 집중되어 있으며, 이는 미국이 이 지역의 안정과 안보를 유지하는 데 관심을 갖는 주요 이유 중 하나이다. 북한의 핵잠재력 개발은 APAC 내 힘의 균형을 근본적으로 변화시켰고, 미국의 주요 동맹국들뿐만 아니라 미국 자신에게도 새로운 안보 위협이 되었다. 북·미 관계의 역사적 발전은 북·미 관계 정상화의 성공이 아무리 인상적이라 해도 북한 핵미사일 잠재력 문제의 완전한 해결은 비현실적인 과제로 남아 있음을 보여줬다. 2017년부터 2019년까지는 북·미 간 합의 체결에 유리한 조건이 조성된 것이 특징이었지만, 실제로는 성사되지 않았다. 이번 연구는 양국 관계의 이러한 변화가 왜 더 이상의 발전을 얻지 못했는지, 그리고 이에 국내 정치 요인들이 어떤 역할을 했는지에 대한 조사를 목적으로 한다. 본 논문은 복잡한 북·미 관계를 고려해 먼저 북·미 관계에 대한 역사적 검토를 제공하고, 2017~2020년 기간 김정은 위원장과 트럼프 대통령 간 협상 과정의 주요 성패에 대해 검토한다. 그런 다음 이 연구는 미국과 북한의 내부 정치적 요인과 북핵 미사일 위기 해결을 위한 협상 과정에 미치는 영향을 분석한다. 이 논문은 트럼프 대통령과 김 위원장 간 협상 과정 실패의 원인이 미국과 북한 내부의 정치적 요인이었음을 보여준다.

**키워드 :** 북미 관계, 내부 정치적 요인, 제재, 북핵 미사일 가능성, 협상 과정.

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# Introduction

## Topic Relevance

The relevance of this work lies in the fact that the situation on the Korean peninsula has an impact on the global security system. One of the main factors affecting stability in the Asia-Pacific region remains the relations between the DPRK and the United States, which have undergone significant changes in recent years. The question of the prospects for the development of these relations is extremely debatable. However, it is safe to say that the dynamics of interaction between the two countries is due not only to foreign policy, but also to domestic political factors.

For the United States, the Asia-Pacific region is a strategically important region that determines the transformation of the world order. In addition, in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States has formed an architecture of alliances with such important regional players as South Korea and Japan. The preservation of dominant positions and leadership in the world system is associated by the United States with the need to maintain the role of a leading player in the Asia-Pacific region. The appearance of intercontinental ballistic missiles in North Korea in 2017 expanded the country's use of its nuclear arsenal. In the US National Security Strategy 2017 it is emphasized that the DPRK's development of its nuclear potential and means of delivering nuclear weapons is a direct threat to US national security (WhiteHouseArchives 2017). In this regard, the problem of the North Korean nuclear missile potential has been one of the main topics of the American foreign policy agenda both at the global and regional levels for many years.

Since the first nuclear test in 2006 North Korea gradually increased its nuclear potential, making it a guarantee of the regime's survival and a way to force the United States to reckon with the DPRK. Since then, the North Korean leadership has maintained a strict foreign policy and continued conducting regular nuclear tests, ignoring the demands of the international community even under sanctions pressure. However, in recent years, the DPRK has considered the level of development of its nuclear potential sufficient to focus on other issues, and in the pre-pandemic period has intensified its diplomatic activities. The main reason for such drastic changes in the position of the North Korean leader was the impact of internal factors, the main of which is the current economic situation that has

worsened dramatically after the imposition of international sanctions. Over the past few years, the issue of normalization of relations with the United States has been key in determining the future development of North Korea.

## **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of the research is to study the mechanisms of influence of domestic political factors in the US and North Korea on the failure of the negotiation process between the US and North Korea.

## **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this research is that success and failures of negotiation process between the US and North Korea are closely related to domestic political interests and problems in both countries. For example, Donald Trump, having concentrated the decision-making center on this issue in his own hands, made the North Korean direction one of the priorities in his foreign policy, seeking to increase his authority with historical efforts to normalize relations with the DPRK. Even when the negotiations reached an impasse, he continued to insist that he and Kim Jong-Un had mutual understanding and strong partnership relations that could move the issue of North Korea's denuclearization from the dead end. However, in reality, he was faced with the intransigence of the American establishment towards North Korea and the lack of interest of the American scientific community in improving relations with a country that poses a threat to international security. For the DPRK, the issue of normalization of relations with the United States is key in determining the country's future. However, the concessions that Kim Jong-Un had to make in order to conclude an interim agreement could not find support from the elite with its historically formed hostility to the United States.

## **Theoretical and methodological foundations of the work**

This research of the influence of domestic political factors on the negotiation process of the United States and the DPRK to solve the problem of North Korean nuclear missile potential is based on the postulates of the school of realism. The theoretical school of realism is based on the works of Thucydides, T. Hobbes, N. Machiavelli, J. Kennan, G. Morgenthau. Realism considers the state as a unit of analysis, and international relations as their anarchic interaction. The foreign policy strategy of

each state should be based on three principles outlined by Hobbes: achieving state security, meeting the economic demands of politically influential segments of the population, and increasing the country's authority in world affairs (Melville 2002).

At the same time, this research is based on the study of domestic political factors, which means that the domestic level of analysis of political factors and their impact on the negotiation process of the United States and the DPRK is of particular importance. That is why the main theoretical school in our study is neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism integrates domestic politics and ideological influences into the analysis of international relations. Elites and domestic political actors can interfere in the decision-making process in foreign policy, which can have a significant impact on the development of the state's foreign policy. The interests of the state are sacrificed to the narrow interests of the elites. Neoclassical realism allows the use of domestic politics and ideas as a subject to conduct a consistent study of international relations. It also emphasizes the importance of political culture and the role of military capabilities that guide states in their foreign policy and distinguish them from other states. Based on the ideas of neoclassical realism, we can see how domestic political factors in the United States and the DPRK influence the foreign policy of states and what consequences such influence can lead to. The analysis of domestic political factors may include the struggle of elites, the competition of branches of government and the political situation within the country. Neoclassical realism includes the premise that domestic political factors have a direct impact on the behavior of the state. According to the attitudes of neoclassical realism, we cannot understand the policy of a state in the international arena unless we analyze what is happening inside this state, in its internal political system (Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy 2011) (Neoclassical Realism n.d.).

The key place in this research is given to the security dilemma. It is a two-level phenomenon, where the first basic level is the dilemma of interpreting the motives, intentions and capabilities of other actors, and the second level is the dilemma of choosing the most rational response to the actions of other actors. The central place here is occupied by a complex relationship of psychological and material aspects. At the level of the interpretation dilemma, there is a psychological problem associated with distrust and uncertainty arising among decision makers. In matters of national security, distrust of other actors is considered the most reasonable strategy. When the leaders of countries solve the

dilemma of reaction in such a way that a situation of mutual hostility is created, which was not the goal of any of the States, a security paradox arises (Ken Booth n.d.). This stimulates an arms race, distrust and hostility. With regard to the North Korean nuclear missile crisis, the security dilemma lies in the desire of the Korean leadership to preserve the regime through nuclear weapons. The DPRK is in a situation where it does not have guaranteed military support from any country, so the leadership needs to independently ensure its national self-reliance and respond to the deployment of the American THAAD missile defense system in South Korea and the conduct of joint US-ROK military exercises by increasing its nuclear missile potential, provoking an even greater escalation tensions on the Korean peninsula and the deterioration of the economic situation in their country.

It is also necessary to understand what types of political regimes are inherent in the countries studied. If in the case of the United States, the political regime of power invariably refers to democratic ones. In the DPRK, there is a gradual transition from a totalitarian type of regime to an authoritarian one due to the institutional and economic reforms carried out by Kim Jong-Un. The type of political regime has a direct impact on the adoption of foreign policy decisions. A. Mints in his work "Understanding the process of making foreign policy decisions" writes that democratic states tend to resolve any conflicts peacefully, while non-democratic states act by coercion, guided by the logic of "the winner gets everything". These differences are explained by the presence of democratic institutions that do not allow the Government to independently make a decision on entering the war and require it to mobilize support within the state for the implementation of foreign policy. However, if democracy is in confrontation with non-democracy, the former is more likely to resort to an aggressive policy that is unusual for it. This means that democratic regime can adhere to a strict foreign policy course, but not in relations with each other (Mintz 2010) .

## **Data Review**

The data in this research is used from various sources: monographs, news reports, statistics provided by various international organizations and government agencies, official documents and researches of analytical centers.

Among the monographs it is worth highlighting the research *Modern Korea: metamorphoses of turbulent years (2008-2020)* written by the leading experts on the problem of the development of North Korea's nuclear potential A. Torkunov, G. Toloraya, I. Dyachkov (A. Torkunov 2021)) which explains the reasons for the development of the DPRK's nuclear program and the main stages of the formation of the DPRK's foreign policy course. The monograph of Donald Trump (Trump 1987) is especially valuable for analyzing his personality, motives for conducting the negotiation process with Kim Jong-Un and establishing personal relations with him. *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making* by Mintz (Mintz 2010 ) contains a study of the processes that lead to decision-making and the dynamics of decision-making and real-world case studies, which help to identify the foreign policy factors that have the greatest influence in the United States and the DPRK and to observe the dynamics of their influence on the country's foreign policy. The monograph *“U.S. strategy in East Asia”* by professor Kireeva contains a comprehensive analysis of the political motives and goals that the United States pursues in East Asia (A. Kireeva 2014).

Various official documents were also used for the study, including: UN Resolutions (Resolutions n.d.), Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (Report n.d.), US national security strategies (Strategies n.d.), National Defense Authorization Act for Year 2019 (Congress.gov, McCain S. John. National Defense Authorization Act for Year 2019 2018.08.13.), North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 (Congress.gov, H.R.757 - North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016. 114th Congress (2015-2016) 2016 )

Articles by the leading US think tanks: *Key Issues for U.S. – North Korea Negotiations* and *Assessing North Korea's Progress in Developing a Nuclear-armed ICBM* by Carnegie (Key Issues for U.S. – North Korea Negotiations 04.06.2018) (Assessing North Korea's Progress in Developing a Nuclear-armed ICBM 2018 ) , *What Future for the Asia Pivot Under Trump?* by Council on Foreign Relations (Trump?), *North Korea and the «Axis of Evil»* by Global Research (Evil» 2004).

In addition, the research analyses the information provided by the North Korean media (KCNA, Rodong Sinmun etc.), the US media (The New York Times, The Washington Post, Reuters etc.) and the Republic of Korea (Yonhab News TV, KBS etc.).

## Scientific novelty

There are a lot of researches concerning the issue of the relations between the US and North Korea and a lot of explanations of the failure of negotiation process between Kim and Trump.

Professor Cha is sure that the North Korean position during the negotiation process with the US reflects little change in their negotiation strategy despite holding the audience of the U.S. president. North Korea stuck to its same negotiating strategy, which is to negotiate its "past" (elements of its program that it no longer really needs), but not its "present" (nuclear weapons arsenal, uranium program) or its "future" (promises on future production bans). In exchange, however, they want real concessions from their negotiating counterpart like sanctions relief. After two summit meetings with the U.S. president, the North was given the chance to make historic progress it did not use it (Cha 2019).

At the same time Professor Snyder is sure that the biggest problem and the reason for the failure of negotiation process is the absence of a commonly held definition of complete denuclearization and a failure to agree on practical steps and measures necessary to achieve that objective (Snyder 2020).

Professor Dalton, Professor Levite and Professor Perkovich are of the opinion that agreement between the US and North Korea was possible. Denuclearization could only be achieved through a protracted process of negotiations and implementation. During these talks, Washington was also required to consult regularly with Tokyo and Seoul to ensure their interests were taken into account, but Trump paid little attention to US alliances in Asia. This problem cannot be solved as quickly as Donald Trump wanted when he stepped up «summit diplomacy» (Toby Dalton 2018).

Despite the fact that there are a lot of comprehensive research on US-North Korean relations and the failure of their negotiations all these studies have limitations. To a large extent all the experts consider either the issue of practical implementation of denuclearization and the US and North Korean foreign policy courses, or historical aspects of the development of relations between the two countries, without focusing on the direct influence of domestic political factors on the failure of negotiation process.

Our research focuses on expanding the analysis of the failure of the negotiation process between the United States and North Korea by including the domestic level of analysis, in particular, how domestic political factors influenced the failure of the negotiation process between the United States and North Korea.

# **Chapter 1. Relations between the US and North Korea under the leadership of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un in 2017-2021.**

## **1.2. Escalation of tensions between the United States and North Korea in the first year of Donald Trump's presidency**

The main reason for the change in the geopolitical situation around the North Korean nuclear crisis was the change of administrations in the United States and South Korea. Democrat Moon Jae-In came to power in the Republic of Korea. His center-left administration treated the North Korean issue with great optimism and sought to improve inter-Korean relations. In the United States, in January 2017, the post of president was taken by Republican Donald Trump, who from the very beginning of his term declared his desire to change the American approach to solving the DPRK nuclear problem. However, at the beginning of 2017, the resolute attitude of the American and South Korean authorities did not find a response in the North and Kim Jong-Un continued his course towards the development of nuclear missile potential.

In 2017 North Korea has made a breakthrough in the development of its missile technologies by testing the Pukkykson–2 mobile missile system. This allowed the DPRK to reduce the time of preparing missiles for launch. It is assumed that Pukkykson – 2 can cover a distance of up to 1500-2000 km. In addition, from April to November 2017, the DPRK launched new medium– and longer–range missiles "Hwasong –12", "Hwasong-14" and "Hwasong-15". Due to the success of North Korea in the development of missile technology, international experts had suspicions about fundamental changes in the country's missile program, which could not but cause concern (Dyachkov 2019).

On July 4, 2017, on the Independence Day of the United States, the DPRK successfully launched a new Hwasong-14 missile, which, according to North Korean media, is an intercontinental missile capable of attacking the territory of the United States. On July 28, North Korea repeated the tests, during which it became clear that the range of the Hwasong-14 missile reaches about 10 thousand kilometers and is capable of hitting New York, Chicago and San Francisco (KCNA 2017). On September 3 of the same year, the DPRK conducted its sixth nuclear test in Hamgyong-Pukto province, where the North Korean nuclear test site Phungeri is located (Yonhap, N. Korea claims successful test of H-bomb 2017).

In response to the DPRK's sixth nuclear test, the UN has taken further steps to curb the development of the DPRK's nuclear program. After the adoption of four resolutions in 2017 – UN Security Council Resolution 2356 of 2.06.2017, UN Security Council Resolution 2371 of 5.09.2017, UN Security Council Resolution 2375 of 11.10.2017 and UN Security Council Resolution 2397 of 22.12.2017, the UN Security Council imposed another package of sanctions that was disastrous for North Korea. They completely banned the export of North Korean lead, seafood, textiles, as well as the creation of enterprises with the participation of North Korean capital (Resolution 2375 (2017)). Resolution 2397 established a limit on the supply of crude oil to the DPRK (500 thousand tons of barrels per year) and refined products (4 million barrels per year). At the same time, states supplying crude oil to North Korea were required to notify the 1718 Committee about the volume of supply every 90 days. An embargo was also imposed on exports to the DPRK of all types of industrial equipment, transport, and metal. North Korea was banned from exporting food and agricultural products, machinery, electrical equipment, earth, stone and wood. In addition, the UN member states were obliged to expel all North Korean workers from their territory within 24 months from the date of adoption of the resolution (Resolution 2397 (2017)).

By the end of 2017, the DPRK's nuclear missile arsenal had reached a critical level of development, so the US began to perceive it as a direct threat to US national security. Donald Trump has repeatedly resorted to threats and insults on Twitter, made loud statements on various platforms and repeatedly hinted at the possibility of using force against the North Korean regime. Also, one of his famous phrases was that North Korea “will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen” (Reuters, Trump says North Korea will be met with 'fire and fury' if it threatens U.S 2017).

Donald Trump's speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly on September 19, 2017 was particularly striking. The President referred the DPRK to the rogue states that pose the greatest threat to peace, and said that the North Korean authorities despise not only other states, but also their own people, condemning them to a hard life under sanctions. Trump also recalled the death of American student Otto Warmbier and the murder of Kim Jong-un's brother in Malaysia. The American president, in his characteristic manner, called the North Korean leader a "rocket man" and thanked everyone who supports the tough sanctions pressure against his regime. The culmination of

the speech was Trump's statement about the ability of the United States to destroy the DPRK, if necessary. Kim Jong-un's response to Trump's extravagant speech did not take long to wait, and the next day he responded on state television, saying that a frightened dog, as a rule, barks louder. The leader of the DPRK threatened the United States with serious retaliatory measures and said: "I will surely and definitely tame the mentally deranged U.S. dotard with fire" (NYT, Trump and Kim Jong-un, and the Names They've Called Each Other 2018).

By the end of 2017, the situation seemed to be deadlocked: the United States and its allies could not afford to unleash a war in the Asia-Pacific region with a nuclear state, but the means of influencing the DPRK through sanctions pressure and threats had almost exhausted themselves, proving the ineffectiveness of this approach to solving the crisis. However, the situation changed dramatically after Kim Jong-Un's unexpected statement immediately after the successful launch of the Hwasong-15 ICBM on November 29, 2017. He said that the DPRK had fully completed the development of its nuclear missile forces. This statement marked a new stage in the development of US-North Korean and inter-Korean relations (Atlantic 2017).

It is important to understand that North Korea's successful ICBM test has led to qualitative changes in the North Korean nuclear program. North Korea became the third (after Russia and China) country whose nuclear missile potential and means of delivery allowed it to strike at the territory of the United States. Realizing the seriousness of the threat to US national security, the military scenario became more and more realistic for Washington. The situation was further inflamed by the demonstratively aggressive nature of the rhetoric of the leaders of the United States and the DPRK. The current situation was not beneficial either for the United States or for both South Korea and North Korea. However, South Korea, which would have taken the brunt of the blow in the event of military action, was most interested in defusing tensions in US-North Korean relations. The South Koreans, who were not sure that Donald Trump would be guided by allied commitments and take into account possible consequences when making foreign policy decisions, faced a situation where it was necessary to show political will and make a decision relying on their own capabilities to ensure national security. That is why Seoul expressed its readiness to play the role of a mediator and take the first steps to activate both the inter-Korean dialogue and the dialogue between Trump and Kim. In September 2017,

President Moon invited North Korean athletes to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, saying that their participation would mark an opportunity for reconciliation on the Korean peninsula (Yonhap, S. Korean president invites N. Korea, world to Pyeongchang 2017).

Another impetus to the warming of relations on the Korean peninsula was the policy pursued by the Chinese leadership. The PRC, which has traditionally supported North Korea and opposed the introduction of harsh economic sanctions, in 2017 tightened its policy and made certain concessions to the United States. China not only supported the introduction of economic sanctions that would have finally weakened the North Korean economy, but also implemented them in good faith. The almost complete cessation of trade with China, which accounts for up to 90% of the DPRK's trade turnover, created a situation where Kim Jong-Un faced the threat of a military strike from the United States and a complete lack of economic support from the main trading partner. Under these circumstances, the DPRK leadership decided to make unprecedented concessions (Lankov A. The Singapore Summit and the failure of Donald Trump's diplomacy 2018).

In his traditional New Year's speech in 2017, Kim Jong-Un said that he was open to dialogue and cooperation, primarily with South Korea, and that North Korea would like to send athletes to the Olympic Games held in South Korea (北김정은 ‘2017 년 신년사’ 전문 2017). The North Korean Olympic team was accompanied by a high-ranking government delegation led by Kim Jong-Un's sister, Kim Yo-Jong. During her visit, she had the meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-In, which was followed by a number of diplomatic contacts between Seoul and Pyongyang, which culminated in the holding of an inter-Korean summit on April 27, 2018 - the first in a decade. Following the summit, the leaders signed the Panmunjom Declaration, which, in addition to the countries' desire to normalize bilateral relations and intensify contacts between Seoul and Pyongyang, also included a commitment to denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In addition, it consolidated the idea of concluding a peace treaty that would put an end to the Korean War of 1950-1953 (준비위원 2017). With the mediation of Moon Jae-In, an agreement was reached to hold a meeting between Kim Jong-Un and President Trump. This statement was in sharp contrast to what was said in Pyongyang before. In the process of preparing for the summit, the North Korean side made a number of additional unilateral concessions. She released American citizens imprisoned in the DPRK who were detained for conducting missionary activities in

the DPRK, and blew up tunnels at the Phungeri nuclear test site (BBC, North Korea nuclear test tunnels at Punggye-ri 'destroyed' 2018).

It was important for Donald Trump to achieve success in the North Korean direction. During his speech at the APEC Summit in Da Nang in November 2017, he called for the creation of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Trump has repeatedly stated that the strengthening of China's regional hegemony undermines regional security and contradicts US interests in the Indo-Pacific region. US Vice President Mike Pence's speech at the Hudson Institute in October 2018 is also noteworthy, in which he openly accused China of using measures incompatible with the principles of free and open trade, hindering US activities in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthening American allied ties in the region (A. Kireeva 2020). Thus, against the backdrop of growing threats from China, President Trump needed a diplomatic victory on the Korean peninsula, which would strengthen American positions in the region as a whole.

## **1.2. The Singapore summit of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un**

On June 12, 2018, US President Donald Trump met with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un at summit in Singapore. Before the meeting, U.S. and North Korean officials held weeks of talks to work out the logistics for the summit, and tried to overcome significant differences on the most important issue on the agenda – the issue of denuclearization. On the US side, the summit was attended by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly and National Security Advisor John Bolton, on the DPRK side — DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Yong-Ho, Deputy Chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of North Korea Kim Yong-Chol and Defense Minister Kwang Chol (Lankov, The Singapore Summit and the failure of Donald Trump's diplomacy 2018).

During the press conference, President Trump pledged to provide security guarantees to the DPRK, and Kim Jong-Un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The signed document says only about "moving towards" a nuclear-free status, and the entire Korean peninsula, and not just the DPRK. There are also no deadlines and no obligations on unilateral disarmament of North Korea.

The Joint Declaration consists of 4 points:

1. The United States and the DPRK commit to establish new relations between the United States and the DPRK in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity.

2. The United States and the DPRK will join their efforts to create a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

3. Confirming the Panmunjom Declaration of April 27, 2018, the DPRK undertakes to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

4. The United States and the DPRK undertake to return the remains of prisoners of war, including the immediate repatriation of those who have already been identified (WhiteHouse 2018).

Special attention should be paid to the fourth point. The issue of repatriation of American prisoners of war is a very sensitive issue in the relations between the DPRK and the United States, and the American side has repeatedly stated that normalization of relations between Washington and Pyongyang is impossible without resolving this issue. From 1990-1994, North Korea sent 208 boxes with the remains of American prisoners of war to the United States, as a result of which 182 people were identified. In 1993, an agreement was reached on the organization of joint North Korean-American missions for further work in this direction. From 1996 to 2005, 33 joint operations were carried out, for which the American leadership allocated more than \$ 20 million. This led to the return of another 220 boxes to the United States. In 2007 North Korea has sent the remains of seven more prisoners of war. However, as relations between Pyongyang and Washington deteriorated, the implementation of these projects became increasingly difficult, so after 2007, work on the repatriation of the remains of American prisoners of war was stopped (Korean War POW/MIA Accounting Efforts 2018). The agreement on the resumption of these procedures was a positive step towards the two countries. Already in July 2018 North Korea has repatriated 55 boxes with the remains of American prisoners of war, while initiating negotiations at the officer level on the resumption of joint North Korean-American operations on the territory of the DPRK (MilitaryTimes 2019.05.28. ).

At a press conference after the signing of the Joint statement, President Trump unilaterally promised that the United States would suspend the annual military exercises of the United States and

South Korea, provided that a “bona fide” dialogue with North Korea continues. Thus, the countries reached an agreement on a "double freeze", which assumed the freezing of nuclear tests and ICBM launches in response to the freezing of joint military exercises of the United States and South Korea. Trump, speaking in the absence of Kim Jong-Un, also said that negotiations would continue between Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and North Korean officials, and that the DPRK had promised to destroy the nuclear facility in Yongbyon. It is reported that the issue of human rights was raised during bilateral discussions between the two sides, but this issue is not mentioned in the Joint statement (ChaVictor 2018).

The closure of the nuclear reactor in Yongbyon would be a significant step towards the denuclearization of the DPRK. Although it is believed that North Korea already possesses enough fissile material for an arsenal of perhaps thirty to fifty nuclear weapons, it is extremely important to stop the accumulation of additional plutonium and highly enriched uranium. If North Korea agreed to close the Yongbyon reactor and refused to put into operation any other reactor capable of generating military-grade plutonium, this would limit its ability to produce tritium, which it probably uses in its hydrogen bombs (Dalton Toby 2018).

Thus, the historic Singapore Summit, which became the first meeting of the leaders of the United States and the DPRK, laid the foundation for further development of dialogue towards normalization of bilateral relations, the DPRK's exit from international isolation, recognition of the DPRK's status as an equal negotiating partner and a possible solution to the North Korean nuclear missile crisis. Despite the fact that the summit was devoid of specifics and did not bring the parties closer to understanding how to resolve the issue of normalization of the countries' relations and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, if we consider it as the initial stage of the negotiation process, where the priority task of the leaders was to identify their positions and frameworks, the Singapore summit can be considered effective. At the same time, the main result of the summit was that the leaders reached an agreement on a double freeze and confirmed the desire of the parties to jointly move towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which led to a decrease in tension between the countries.

### **1.3. The Hanoi summit of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un**

After the sensational Singapore summit, the world was waiting for a new meeting of the leaders of the United States and North Korea. The second summit of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un took place in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi on February 27 - 28, 2019. On the first day of the summit, the leaders had a brief one-on-one conversation and had a dinner. Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un commented on the first day of negotiations, saying that they managed to discuss many important things. Therefore, the sudden end of the summit the next day without joint statements or signed documents came as a surprise. Although the details of the talks between Pyongyang and Washington remain undisclosed, the US National Security Adviser confirmed that the North Korean side was able to offer only "very limited concessions" (Vertic 2019).

Although the Hanoi Summit did not give either side the result it had hoped for, it gave an important insight into the priorities and weaknesses of each country (Diplomat 2019). There was a feeling that both leaders fundamentally underestimated each other. Kim Jong-Un, apparently, hoped that Donald Trump, striving for victory in foreign policy, would offer him the maximum possible relaxation of the sanctions regime in exchange for maintaining a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests, restrictions on existing nuclear stocks and the possible permanent closure of Yongbyon reactor. Trump, thinking that Kim agreed to the talks because of his maximum pressure policy and tough rhetoric, assumed he could attract Kim with Vietnamese-style economic development. None of the expectations were fulfilled in Hanoi (Mi. 2019). Indeed, Donald Trump hoped that the DPRK would be able to take the Vietnamese model as a model for its development. The United States used the case of Vietnam as an example of a communist country that established close cooperation with the US, managing to distance itself from the enmity and contradictions of the past, and became one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, open to foreign investment. That is why the choice of Vietnam, which, among other things, is one of the few countries that maintain diplomatic relations with both countries, as the place for the second US-North Korean summit was quite expected.

Despite the fact that the summit ended ahead of schedule and without signing any document, the parties expressed their desire to continue negotiations at the working level. Many experts were

quick to call this meeting a "failure", but the leaders themselves highly appreciated its importance in normalizing the situation on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the DPRK maintained a moratorium on nuclear tests and expressed hope for an early resumption of the negotiation process.

The next day, South Korean President Moon Jae-In, at a ceremony dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement Day, spoke positively about the second summit of the leaders of the DPRK and the United States, saying that it was another important stage on the way to cooperation between the two countries. The President announced a new regime on the Korean peninsula, which will be based on peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation between South and North Korea. This regime will put an end to the historical stage of hostility and ideological confrontation between them (Address by President Moon Jae-in on 100th March First Independence Movement Day 2019). The achievement of this goal was facilitated by the holding of three inter-Korean summits - on April 27 and May 26, 2018 on the border of the two Koreas, as well as on September 18-20, 2018 in Pyongyang. As a result of the summits, the Panmunjom and Pyongyang Declarations were adopted, which recorded the countries' desire to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, improve inter-Korean relations, intensify contacts between families separated by the Korean War, as well as to replace the ceasefire agreement with a full-fledged peace treaty (KBSWorld, Inter-Korean summits and peace on the Korean Peninsula 2018).

The Hanoi summit proved that the DPRK and the United States were not ready to make additional concessions necessary to sign at least an interim version of the agreement and normalize the situation on the Korean peninsula. For Kim Jong-Un, the central issue was still the easing of the sanctions regime in exchange for the introduction of a moratorium on nuclear tests and the closure of the Yongbyon complex. The United States was not ready to give up the main lever of influence on the North Korean authorities in exchange for the closure of the Yongbyon nuclear center. Although this scientific and technical complex is a significant object for the Korean nuclear missile program, according to the data available to the US, it is far from the only nuclear facility of the DPRK. At the same time, during the negotiations, the North Korean side was not ready to offer anything more than the closure of the complex in Yongbyon, so for the United States, the lifting of economic sanctions was too high a price for such minor concessions from the DPRK. Under the circumstances, it was

impossible to sign any document satisfying the requirements of both sides. Nevertheless, the Hanoi summit should be perceived from the position of the White House – "it is better to have no deal than to have a bad one" (CNN, Bolton on NK: 'No deal is better than a bad deal' 2019).

#### **1.4. Relations between the US and the DPRK between the second and third summits**

The problem of different perceptions of the process of North Korean denuclearization in the USA and the DPRK became more and more obvious. On March 11, 2019, in Washington the Carnegie Center organized an international conference on nuclear policy, which was attended by the US Special Representative for North Korean Affairs Stephen Biegun. He said that the United States did not agree with the scenario of the gradual denuclearization of the DPRK, and the only acceptable solution to the North Korean nuclear problem, which the Trump administration unanimously supports, was the "total solution". The American version of the denuclearization of North Korea under the slogan "all or nothing" implies the complete destruction of the entire nuclear arsenal of the DPRK, after which Washington initiates the process of lifting all sanctions from the country. Biegun noted that it was the policy of concessions to the North Korean regime, which was carried out by previous administrations, that had led to the formation of a nuclear state in the face of the DPRK (KBSWorld, Stephen Biegun: The USA and the DPRK continue the dialogue 2019). Despite the fact that Donald Trump himself was extremely interested in the speedy normalization of US-North Korean relations and remained optimistic, not all of his advisers and officials shared this approach.

On April 12, 2019, at the first session of the Supreme People's Assembly of the 14th convocation Kim Jong-Un made a statement on the results of the Hanoi summit. He said that his next meeting with Donald Trump will take place only if he develops a new approach to negotiations and moves away from its senseless hostile pressure policy. The North Korean leader called on the United States to seek constructive solutions instead of a policy of unilateral demands. In addition, Kim Jong-Un has set a deadline for making proposals from the United States by the end of 2019 (조선중앙통신, 경애하는 최고령도자 김정은동지께서 최고인민회의 제 14 기 제 1 차회의에서 시정연설을 하시였다 2019).

Despite Donald Trump's promises to suspend US-South Korean military exercises, from April 15 to 20, exercises involving THAAD complexes were held at the US military base Camp Humphreys, located in the South Korean city of Pyeongtaek. The purpose of exercises is to strengthen protection against North Korean missiles. On April 22, joint two-week exercises of the ROK and US Air Forces took place, which, although smaller than the annual Max Thunder exercises, still caused a negative reaction from the North Korean side. In the DPRK, such actions were considered a violation of the Panmunjom and Pyongyang declarations and promised that such a provocation could lead to a response (Asmolov, Military cooperation between South Korea and the USA 2019).

In response, the DPRK conducted test launches of short-range missiles towards the East Sea in May 2019, which caused a mixed reaction in the United States. Donald Trump did not attach much importance to these launches, saying that they do not violate the provisions of any of the resolutions. However, National Security Adviser John Bolton and Acting US Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan said that North Korea's missile launches were carried out in violation of UN Security Council resolutions (VoiceofAmerica 2019). However, it was not true, as the resolutions prohibit only nuclear tests and ICBM launches.

In this tense situation, the United States released the "2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report" on June 1, 2019. In the document, North Korea was ranked among the rogue states that pose a threat for global security, allies and rivals of the US. It also mentions that North Korea distributes conventional weapons, nuclear technology, ballistic missiles and chemical warfare agents to countries such as Iran and Syria. The authors of the document indicated that the DPRK was ready to use its nuclear potential to achieve its goals and outlined the threat that the DPRK's intercontinental ballistic missiles could cause. In addition, North Korea was condemned for non-compliance with the sanctions regime established by the UN Security Council (Indo-Pacific Strategy Report 2020).

On June 11, 2019, the American president received a letter from the North Korean leader. Trump stated that it was very personal, warm and good. He also said that such events gave hope for the third summit (TheKoreaTimes, 'I received a beautiful letter from Kim': Trump 2019). On June 23, Trump sent a reply letter to Kim Jong-Un, which caused a positive reaction in Pyongyang. Kim said he was satisfied with its content and noted the courage and determination of President Trump. These

positive signals gave reason to count on a new stage of the negotiation process and the holding of the next summit.

The long-awaited meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un took place in the same month. On June 29, 2019, the American president arrived in South Korea on a state visit. According to the officials, before his arrival in Seoul Donald Trump sent Kim Jong-Un a letter with an offer to meet at the border of North and South Korea, and the North Korean leader has agreed. As a result, Trump, accompanied by South Korean President Moon Jae-In, arrived at the demilitarized zone on the border of the two countries, where he was met by Kim Jong-Un. North Korean leader led Trump to the territory of North Korea. After this symbolic gesture, the leaders held brief talks. Kim Jong-Un said that this visit by Trump to North Korea, which made him the first president to visit the DPRK, expressed his desire to work on a "new future", and Donald Trump expressed his gratitude for the honor given to him (NYT, Trump Steps Into North Korea and Agrees With Kim Jong-un to Resume Talks 2019).

The North Korean press immediately called this meeting a historic event, which was another step by the leaders of the two countries on the way to denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and normalization of bilateral relations (로동신문 2019). At the same time, most American analysts considered this visit theatrical and devoid of any specifics and prospects. In their opinion, Donald Trump has once again played the North Korean card to increase his own rating (BBC, Trump in North Korea: KCNA hails 'amazing' visit 2019.07.01).

Nevertheless, regardless of the assessments, this meeting brought one significant result – the parties agreed to create a working group, the purpose of which was to coordinate the negotiation process of the DPRK and the United States and develop new conditions for negotiations. In addition, after the dismissal of the "hawk" - John Bolton, who opposed any deals with the DPRK that could limit the interests of the United States, there were quite favorable conditions for establishing the negotiation process.

However, these agreements did not prevent the joint military exercises of the ROK and the United States and the launches of short-range missiles of the DPRK. In the period from May 4 to October 2, 2019 North Korea launched 11 short-range missiles in response to the supply of American

fifth-generation F-35A fighters to South Korea (조선중앙통신, 조선민주주의인민공화국 외무성 대변인담화 2019). In addition, despite the promises made by Donald Trump during the summits, a series of military exercises of the Republic of Korea and the United States was held in August 2019. They were held in computer stimulation mode and were supposed to determine the degree of readiness of the South Korean military to gain control over their troops in wartime (Asmolov, To the end of the autumn exercises of the USA and the Republic of Korea 2019). However, the North Korean leadership considered these exercises provocative and sharply criticized the ROK. It was noted that Trump did not criticize the North Korean launches of short-range missiles, thereby recognizing the DPRK's right to self-defense, while the ROK unleashed bellicose rhetoric and began purchasing new types of weapons. The North Korean representative also said that, in the future, the DPRK intends to conduct a dialogue only with the United States, and not with South Korea in any way (조선중앙통 2019).

### **1.5. The last attempt to return to negotiations between the US and the DPRK in 2020.**

On October 5, 2019, official working-level talks between representatives of the United States and the DPRK began in Stockholm. The North Korean side was represented by the Ambassador-at-Large of the DPRK Foreign Ministry, Kim Myung-Gil, the previous director of the North America Department of the DPRK Foreign Ministry, Kwon Jung-Geun, and his successor, Chong Chol-Su. The American delegation included US Special Representative for the DPRK Stephen Biegun and US State Department Special Representative for the DPRK Mark Lambert. Even before the start of the talks it was known that Trump had expressed readiness to offer Kim Jong-Un new conditions included a three-year freeze of UN sanctions on the export of coal and textiles in exchange for dismantling the nuclear complex in Yongbyon and stopping the production of highly enriched uranium (Time, Exclusive: Trump Shows 'No Interest' in New North Korea Missile Threat, Prepares Diplomatic 2019). This information gave hope for a success of working negotiations and the development of a compromise agreement. However, the negotiations ended unexpectedly.

On the very first day, representatives of the DPRK announced their withdrawal from the negotiations. According to the head of the North Korean delegation, the talks ended in vain due to the lack of a new approach to negotiations by the United States. Kim Myung-Gil said that the United States, having raised the stakes before the start of negotiations, in fact could not offer anything new, which only caused his disappointment and caused the failure. He also made it clear that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula would be possible only if all threats to the security of the DPRK were eliminated (연합뉴스, 스톡홀름 협상결렬 곧 2 주...美 "北 안보이익 고려하겠다" 손짓 2018). However, according to the press secretary of the US State Department Morgan Ortagus, the comments of the representatives of the North Korean delegation do not reflect reality. She said that during the negotiations, the United States proposed a number of initiatives to implement the Singapore Agreement (U.S.DepartmentofState 2019).

The reason for the failure of the negotiations remained the same – the DPRK and the United States continued to insist on their options for solving the nuclear crisis of North Korea. The DPRK also stated the need to stop the joint exercises of the United States and the ROK and the withdrawal of the American military contingent from the South, as well as the easing of the sanctions regime, which completely contradicted the American scenario. For Donald Trump, on the eve of the presidential elections in November 2020, it was extremely important, if not to force, then at least to preserve the diplomatic success achieved. It is safe to say that both leaders were interested in the success of the negotiations, but it was not possible to find an acceptable option for concessions.

The situation has also worsened on the inter-Korean relations. June 16, 2020 North Korea blew up the inter-Korean communications office in the city of Kaesong to demonstrate its unwillingness to continue fruitless negotiations with the South (Yonhap, N. Korea blows up joint office in Kaesong 2020). By the time of the explosion of the communications office, inter-Korean contacts had already been minimized, and this incident finally put the negotiation process on pause.

The autumn of 2019 has reversed any possibility of a return to negotiations. Despite the decision of the US and the ROK to postpone the December Vigilant ACM military exercises, on October 31, North Korea conducted a test firing of an ultra-large rocket gun, and on November 28, tests of multiple rocket launchers (NewEasternOutlook, The DPRK is improving its "super-large

MLRS" 2019). Thus, it became obvious that the DPRK's weapons tests were an attempt to bring the United States to the negotiation table, as President Trump's term was coming to an end, Kim realized that in 2020 the post of US president could be occupied by a person whose foreign policy priority will not include normalization of relations with the DPRK. There is also an assumption that the North Korean tests were related to the resolution of the UN Third Committee on Humanitarian Affairs adopted on November 14, 2019, which condemned the violation of human rights in the DPRK (NewEasternOutlook, ]What is the prospect of a North Korean-American dialogue? 2019).

In December 2019 Kim Jong-Un issued another warning to Trump. He accused the American president of trying to delay the negotiations and said that it only depends on him what kind of gift they would receive for Christmas. The public immediately assumed that we were talking about long-range missile tests, for which the North Korean leader imposed a moratorium back in 2017. However, Donald Trump, in his usual joking way, said that he would find out what kind of gift it was and even suggested that it might turn out to be a good one: "Maybe it's a present where he sends me a beautiful vase as opposed to a missile test" (Reuters, US ready to deal with any North Korean «Christmas gift»: Trump 2019).

Although by the end of 2020 the relations between the two countries were not in the acute phase of the conflict, as it was in 2017, they stopped developing. The DPRK was waiting for the US presidential election and was in no hurry to enter the next stage of negotiations without understanding Washington's further course on the North Korean problem. Meanwhile, Donald Trump continued to declare success in the North Korean direction, emphasizing his good relations with Kim Jong-Un. Trump especially highlighted the fact that he had become the first US president who was in North Korea and recalled his summits with Kim Jong-Un, and even attributed to himself the success of the 2018 Olympics in South Korea, in which North Korean athletes took part (Yonhap, Trump says relationship with N.K. leader 'very good' 2020).

On March 22, Donald Trump sent a letter to Kim Jong-Un offering his help in the fight against the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, which swept the whole world with terrifying speed in 2020 and led to the closure of the DPRK's borders in January 2020. The leader of the DPRK himself did not comment on this letter, but his sister Kim Yo-Jong said that Kim Jong-Un had praised Trump's gesture,

demonstrating the special personal relationship between the two leaders. However, she noted that this was not enough to improve relations between the countries (연합뉴스, 트럼프 "北에 코로나 19 지원 의사"... 북미대화 재개? 2020).

By 2020, the negotiation process between the United States and the DPRK, which led to a double freeze, as well as the improvement of US-North Korean and inter-Korean relations, was put on pause due to a number of reasons, including the COVID-19 pandemic, missile launches by the DPRK, the lack of political will for denuclearization by the North Korean authorities and the unwillingness of the American authorities to go to easing of the sanctions regime and withdrawal of troops from South Korea. Despite the fact that both sides were interested in negotiating and signing an agreement to normalize US-North Korean relations the concessions they made in the period from 2017-2020 proved to be an insufficient condition for reaching an agreement. It can be noted that throughout the negotiation process, both sides raised the stakes and went on provocations, trying to determine the limits of acceptable concessions that the opposite side is ready to make. Without such "bidding", it is simply impossible to conclude an agreement that will meet the interests of both countries. In addition, it must be understood that no sanctions or other "maximum pressure" from the United States will force North Korea to immediately undertake comprehensive denuclearization. Such a result can be achieved (if it can be achieved at all) only through a long negotiation process and even longer implementation of agreements that would convince Kim Jong-Un and the political elite of the DPRK that they can trust US security guarantees and count on significant and sustainable economic and political benefits from the US. Perhaps if Donald Trump had won the 2020 presidential election, the negotiation process could have received a new impetus and an agreement that would meet the interests of the DPRK, the United States and other key players in the Asia-Pacific region would have been signed. However, Democrat Joseph Biden came to power. He turned out to be much more categorical in his attitude to the North Korean regime, as a result of which the normalization of US-North Korean relations was again under threat.

## **Chapter 2. The influence of domestic political factors in the United States on the negotiation process to solve the North Korean nuclear missile problem**

### **2.1. The role of the US Congress and inter-party contradictions in the choice of approaches to solving the DPRK nuclear missile problem**

The process of making foreign policy decisions in the United States is influenced by many domestic political factors, the main of which are the influence of Congress and the establishment and the participation of think tanks in the formation of the foreign policy. Each of these factors has played a role in the historical development of relations between the United States and the DPRK, contributes both to the improvement of relations between the two countries and the escalation of tension between them in different periods of time. In addition, in our study, a special place is given to the analysis of the personality factor of Trump, who managed to change the US foreign policy agenda by defining the North Korean issue as a priority direction of his foreign policy.

The development of an integrated approach to solving the North Korean nuclear missile crisis is an important issue of the work of the US Congress. There is a widespread opinion that Congress is not the driving force of American politics, therefore its influence on the formation of the US foreign policy course is considered insignificant. Congressmen have many levers of influence on the US leadership, which for many years have been used to create conditions for negotiations, to express support or criticism of the administration's actions, as well as to create mechanisms of pressure on the North Korean regime. There are several factors that can affect the attitude of members of Congress to the North Korean problem:

- 1) perception of the threat posed by the DPRK's nuclear program;
  - 2) an idea of steps the US should take in response to the DPRK's nuclear tests;
  - 3) attitude to the problem of human rights in the DPRK;
  - 4) an idea of an effective strategy for negotiating with the North Korean side;
  - 5) the attitude of the electorate to the North Korean problem
  - 6) the congressman's party affiliation
- (ArmsControlAssociationReport 2018)

The powers of the Congress include the development and adoption of draft laws and joint resolutions, control over the distribution of the federal budget, conducting supervisory hearings, as well as procedures for the ratification of international treaties and the appointment of senior government officials (Davenport Kelsey 2018).

It is important to note that the current president's policy towards the DPRK and his diplomatic activity directly affects the work of the Congress. For comparison, during the 115th Congress (2017-2018), the Congress held 14 hearings and submitted 63 documents on the North Korean issue. Such increased interest was associated with the policy of Donald Trump, for whom the issue of North Korea's nuclear missile development was one of the most important issues of US foreign policy. While in the period from 2013-2014, when the Obama administration, adhering to the policy of strategic patience, was in power, only 6 hearings were held in Congress and 43 documents on DPRK issues were submitted (ArmsControlAssociationReport 2018).

Representatives of the Democratic and Republican parties traditionally disagree in their ideas about an effective policy towards North Korea. While Republican Donald Trump's North Korean policy found support among his fellow party members, representatives of the Democratic Party regularly expressed their distrust of his political course towards the DPRK. For example, in 2019, 8 representatives of the Democratic Party published an appeal to the president, expressing their concern about his lack of a specific and clearly formulated diplomatic strategy for negotiations with the North Korean leader. In the appeal, the senators ask to develop and submit to Congress his plans and strategy for conducting the negotiation process with the DPRK, as well as strengthen alliances with the ROK, Japan and other regional partners. They urged Trump not to ignore North Korean launches of short- and medium-range missiles that threaten regional security, and to hold Pyongyang accountable for ongoing human rights violations and to continue sanctions pressure (UnitedStatesSenatorforCalifornia 2019).

Another important mechanism of Congressional influence on the formation of the US foreign policy course is financing. Congress uses its budgetary powers to impose certain restrictions on the implementation of the President's political projects or to deprive it of funding. Congress also used its budgetary powers after Trump's statement at the Singapore summit with Kim Jong-Un, during which

Trump expressed readiness to suspend military exercises with the ROK and interest in reducing the US military contingent in the country. Congress expressed concern about possible unilateral decision by the President to reduce the military contingent and reacted by including an amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019. According to the document, funds of the Ministry of Defense cannot be used to reduce the size of the US armed forces in South Korea unless certain conditions are met, including compliance of this decision with the national security of the United States and the security of US allies in the region, as well as mandatory consultation with the ROK and Japan (Congress.gov, McCain S. John. National Defense Authorization Act for Year 2019 2018.08.13.).

The third instrument of influence on the policy of the presidential administration is sanctions, which Congress uses, setting its own conditions for their cancellation or weakening, as well as demanding the introduction of new sanctions. This certainly deprives the President's foreign policy of flexibility, which is of great importance during the negotiation process (ArmsControlAssociationReport 2018). The perception of the effectiveness of sanctions by Congress only increased after the conclusion of the Iranian nuclear deal. Most lawmakers are convinced that it was the sanctions pressure that pushed Iran to the negotiating table, so they insist on the strict application of this approach to North Korea (BelferCenter 2016). For example, the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 requires the Secretary of State to regularly send a report to Congress, which should contain a detailed overview of the actions taken by the State Department to implement the strategy of international application and enforcement of UN sanctions against North Korea. In addition, the Congress provides for additional sanctions against the DPRK's programs to create weapons of mass destruction and human rights violations. The document also says that before lifting sanctions from the country, the president is obliged to make sure that North Korea has fulfilled the following requirements: completely abandoned nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons programs, released all political prisoners, including North Korean citizens, abolished censorship of peaceful political activities, formed an open and representative society, and also made a count and the repatriation of both living and deceased US citizens, who were abducted or illegally held captive by North Korea or detained in violation of the Korean War Armistice Agreement (Congress.gov, H.R.757 - North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016. 114th

Congress (2015-2016) 2016 ). It is obvious that such extensive congressional demands deprive the president of the opportunity to use the easing of the sanctions regime as an incentive during negotiations with the North Korean side.

After Trump signed a Joint Statement following the Singapore Summit, Congress demanded that the president provide any final solution related to the North Korean problem for his approval. The legislators also insisted that any agreement with the DPRK should be fixed in the form of a treaty. Such requirements are based on the fact that the ratification of the treaty involves congressional consultations and requires the approval of 2/3 of the Senate. Given the current attitude of members of Congress towards North Korea, it is impossible to get Congressional approval of any treaty without the country fulfilling an impressive list of conditions. With such demands, congressmen were trying to reduce the possibility of concessions to the North Korean leadership to a minimum. The question of the need to formalize all US agreements with other countries in the format of a deal was raised back in 2015, when Barack Obama signed the Iranian nuclear deal. Republicans hoped that Trump would not make the same mistake and sign a treaty that his successor would not be able to simply tear up, as Trump did with the Iran deal (Reuters, Congress passes tougher North Korea sanctions, sends bill to Obama 2016). It is obvious that for the leadership of North Korea, which understands that the ratification of any treaty with the United States will go through congressmen, among whom a negative attitude towards the DPRK prevails, negotiations on signing the treaty are an undesirable scenario.

Nowadays the Congress is actively involved in the formation of a common US foreign policy on issues related to denuclearization, peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. By criticizing and using their budgetary and sanctions powers as mechanisms of influence on the government, congressmen are able not only to prevent the implementation of any plans of the administration, but also to make adjustments to the country's foreign policy strategy. The party affiliation of congressmen plays an important role in choosing an approach to solving the North Korean nuclear missile problem. The traditional differences between representatives of the Republican and Democratic parties remain when choosing the North Korean strategy of the United States in Congress, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the president's policy towards the North Korean regime. Analyzing the policy of

Congress under the Trump administration, it can be concluded that it played an important role in stopping the negotiation process between the DPRK and the United States

## **2.2. The changed role of think tanks under the Trump administration.**

The vast majority of think tanks that deal with issues of international relations, security and foreign policy are located in the United States. There are several types of think tanks – contractual, academic and politically oriented. Academic think tanks publish independent political research and receive financial support from various foundations and philanthropists. The most influential representatives of this type of think tanks are the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Brookings Institution (Murray 2009). The relationship of think tanks with the government and the degree of their influence on the country's foreign policy differs with each administration of the US president.

It is also important to note that the activities of think tank employees are often influenced by their political orientation or ties to a particular party, which can make their research less balanced and impartial. Lobbying for the interests of any political groups often leads to the fact that think tanks no longer create new ideas, but only spread those ideas that need to be conveyed to the government or the broad masses.

From the very beginning, the administration of George W. Bush chose a strategy of cooperation with the most influential think tanks in the United States, including Heritage Foundation, Project for the New American Century and the American Enterprise Institute. Many employees of ministries and the presidential administration were representatives of neoconservatives, who, being closely connected with conservative think tanks and the financial elite, actively pushed the Republican Party to the right turn. Donald Rumsfeld, who served as Secretary of Defense in 2001-2006 and Vice President of the United States under Bush Jr. Dick Cheney (2001-2009), were not neoconservatives, but it was under their leadership that the office of the president, the Ministry of Defense, the Pentagon and the Defense Policy Council became a stronghold of neoconservatives, among whom were Richard

Pearl, Douglas Faith and Paul Wolfowitz (Kubilai 2014). Rumsfeld, who for 20 years was a trustee of the RAND think tank, a board member of Hoover University and the main partner of the neoconservative analytical center "New American Century", was one of the initiators of military actions against Iraq and Afghanistan and openly opposed countries that did not support US military operations, which is why he was dubbed the "architect the Iraqi and Afghan wars" (BBC, Outrage at "old Europe" remarks 2003).

In 1997, the analytical center "New American Century" issued a "Statement of Principles", which contains recommendations for the implementation of American foreign policy in modern realities. This statement calls for increasing military spending, strengthening the democratic regime, as well as promoting political and economic freedoms around the world. In addition, the publication emphasizes the special role of the United States in preserving and maintaining international order, which gives the country the authority to fight unfriendly regimes that threaten the ideals and values of the United States and its allies from the democratic camp (PNAC 1997). This statement has a long list of authors, including Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz, who later occupied key government positions and were responsible for the formation and implementation of the US military strategy and foreign policy. Later these ideas were reflected in the famous "Bush doctrine", which legitimized the right of the United States to launch a preemptive strike and pursue a tough unilateral policy against unfriendly states (among which is the DPRK), making it one of the most controversial in the history of the United States.

The representative of the Democratic Party, Barack Obama, who became the next US president after George W. Bush, has always emphasized the importance of think tanks in implementing the policies of his administration. For example, in 2013, he stated that the Center for American Progress provides him not only with political ideas and initiatives, but also with employees for his administration. A third of the staff of this analytical center became part of the Obama administration, including John Podesta, who led the presidential transition in 2014 and later became his adviser, Denis McDonough, who served as Deputy National Security Adviser to the US President (2010-2013), Neera Tanden, who headed the Center for American Progress, and under Obama was a senior adviser to the US Department

of Health, as well as Jennifer Palmieri, who held a leadership role in the same center, later becoming an adviser on President Obama's communications (Tevi 2017).

The Center for American Progress was originally conceived by John Podesta as a counterweight to the conservative think tanks that the Republican Party traditionally turned to for analysis and propaganda of its political agendas. That is why the liberals desperately needed an authoritative analytical center that would become the "brain" of the Democratic Party (Dreyfuss 2004).

John Podesta's role in shaping the North Korean policy of the Obama administration became the subject of discussion after his surprise visit to the DPRK with former President Bill Clinton in 2009. The official purpose of this visit was the release of two American journalists detained in Pyongyang, but the presence of Podesta, who led Obama's transition without being an expert on Asia, gave rise to a wave of discussions that the purpose of this visit was not only the release of American citizens, but also the preparation for a new stage of negotiations between the United States and the DPRK under the new administration. Despite the fact that the White House has repeatedly refuted these assumptions, there are several facts that confirm them. Firstly, the decision to send Bill Clinton there is symbolic, as the 1994 Framework Agreement was signed during his leadership. Secondly, the Wikileaks organization, which distributes information obtained from anonymous sources or as a result of leaks, published a document that was sent to John Podesta after negotiations. The document reports the contents of the meeting between Clinton and Kim Jong-Il, during which the former US president expressed hope for holding US-North Korean talks, while continuing to negotiate in the six-party format. Clinton also assured the North Korean leadership of Obama's readiness to intensify the negotiation process on the basis of mutual respect. In addition, he discussed with Kim Jong-Il the possibility of visiting Pyongyang by Stephen Bosworth, who served as the authorized representative of the United States in the DPRK 2009-2011 (TheKoreaTimes, Bill Clinton Suggested N. Korea Pursue Direct Talks with US in Tandem with Six-Party Talks 2016). By the way, Bosworth's visit really took place four months after Clinton's visit (NYT, US Envoy Makes Rare visit to North Korea 2004).

However, the role of think tanks in shaping US foreign policy has changed dramatically under the Trump administration. Even during the election campaign, Donald Trump differed from his predecessors and rivals in that there were no representatives of think tanks in his team. This decision

was surprising, given the long-term practice of presidential campaigns and Trump's lack of experience in public administration. However, this trend continued throughout his presidential term. For think tanks, the priorities of the Trump administration were too unpredictable and fickle, which prevented them from preparing and distributing timely analysis and recommendations. It has been repeatedly noted that Trump would rather choose to discuss the political agenda with Twitter users than research staff of analytical centers (OnThinkTanks 2017).

Donald Trump did not have confidence in think tanks and, being a successful businessman, tried to deal with experts who had achieved success in business, not in the academic field. So, in an effort to surround himself with people close in spirit, Trump chose successful entrepreneurs Stephen Bannon, Jarett Kushner, as well as Rex Tillerson as Secretary of state as chief strategists and advisers (ThinkTankWatch 2017).

However, it is difficult to fully agree with such assessments, because during the transition campaign, Donald Trump nevertheless resorted to the help of former employees of the Heritage Foundation think tank. In addition, the Trump administration has adopted and implemented several policy recommendations of the Heritage Foundation, including withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and UNESCO, an increase in the military budget and in the development of natural resources in the United States (TheHeritageFoundation 2018).

However, in the case of the negotiation process with North Korea and the successes that Trump managed to achieve in this matter, we cannot talk about the merits of the Heritage Foundation. It is obvious that negotiations and improvement of relations between the two countries were not among the priorities of the think tank. Such a conclusion can be made by studying the publications of leading experts of this think tank and their positions on the North Korean issue. The foundation's most authoritative expert on the North Korean nuclear issue is Bruce Klingner, a senior researcher on Northeast Asia, who served in the CIA for 20 years and dealt mainly with issues of South Korea and North Korea. In his publications, he argues that the campaign against the development of the North Korean nuclear missile potential should be more ambitious, purposeful and prolonged. In addition, the United States should be ready to put pressure not only on the North Korean regime, but also on Chinese companies that have been bypassing the sanctions regime for all these years, reducing sanctions'

effectiveness. He criticizes the cautious approach to the DPRK, stating that it testifies to international collective apathy and unwillingness to confront the North Korean threat (Klingner, Time for “Shock and Awe Sanctions” on North Korea / The Heritage Foundation 2017 ).

Moreover, Klingner has repeatedly criticized Trump's policy towards North Korea. In his publication for the Heritage Foundation, he criticized Trump's attempts to reduce sanctions pressure on the DPRK during the intensification of the negotiation process, saying that by such actions he not only demonstrates to other countries the non-necessity of sanctions measures, but also discredits the entire American foreign policy course. In addition, Klingner claims that Trump's actions to ease pressure on the DPRK do not have the proper effect, since even his unilateral decision in 2018 The cancellation of at least 11 military exercises with the ROK and Japan did not bring the countries closer to any agreement. Also, as an argument, the author cites the opinion of retired Lieutenant General, who is a military expert of the Heritage Foundation, Thomas Spur, who argues that the most powerful state in the world (the United States) has no reason to cancel military exercises with its ally, thereby weakening the combat readiness of countries, in order to please to the North Korean dictator (Klingner, Trump Undercuts “Maximum Pressure” Strategy on North Korea / The Heritage Foundation 2019).

The Heritage Foundation was the only think tank whose expert assessment and analysis the Trump administration was ready to accept. Donald Trump highly appreciated the fund's contribution to the implementation of individual state projects, but in matters of foreign policy, Trump was inclined to make unpredictable decisions that went against the position of the expert community, relying on his own flair. That is why there is a widespread opinion that the period of Trump's leadership was the death for the activities of US think tanks. We should understand that Trump's unwillingness to cooperate with think tanks deprived him of the opportunity to make significant progress on the US-North Korean track. The American system of foreign policy formation, which has been formed for many years, assumes the active participation of intellectual and authoritative representatives of think tanks. This is necessary not only to popularize the foreign policy course of the presidential administration, but also to form high-quality analytics and forecasts for building an effective strategy. As a result, Trump, who ignored this important foreign policy tool, shielded himself from the American expert community and pursued an unpopular and unpredictable policy towards North Korea.

### **2.3. Trump's factor in the negotiation process with North Korea**

Donald Trump went down in history as the first US president who not only intensified the negotiation process and held several summits with Kim Jong-Un, but also, according to Trump, established personal friendly relations with him. Despite the fact that his policy towards the DPRK has often been criticized, and the process of normalizing relations between the two countries has been put on pause by the current Biden administration, in our study of the influence of domestic political factors on the US-North Korean negotiation process, Trump's personality factor in negotiations with the DPRK requires special attention.

Donald Trump is a businessman for whom the key to success is the making of big deals. Even in his memoirs, he emphasizes that making a deal for him is a special kind of art that he does professionally (Trump 1987). Even during his election campaign, Trump said that he had been a master negotiator all his life, so as president he would be able to use his skills to break up the old useless agreements that his predecessors had concluded and make new bilateral agreements that would meet the interests of the United States (VanityFair 2018). He clearly showed how a successful businessman with no experience in public administration and politics can use his knowledge as president. There are many analytical studies of Trump's negotiating tactics that explain his failures and successes in implementing American foreign policy. In our study, Trump's use of these tactics during the negotiation process with the DPRK is of keen interest.

One of the most common methods of Trump in his relations with opponents is the escalation of tension. Faced with aggressive behavior, which in Trump's case manifested itself in harsh rhetoric, derogatory expressions, distortion of facts and ambiguous demands, opponents were forced to negotiate on the aggressor's terms, matching his behavior or surpassing it. It is obvious that Trump, as a man from the world of big business, where there are no regulated procedures for conducting negotiations, sought to bring his opponent to the manner of negotiations known to him (Ilias Kapoutsis n.d.). Trump's use of this tactic could be seen even during Trump's election campaign, when he resorted to insults, gave nicknames to his opponents and threatened to initiate criminal prosecution of Hillary

Clinton after his victory (TheGuardian, Donald Trump threatens to jail Hillary Clinton in second presidential debate 2016).

After his victory in the presidential election, Trump chose a course of escalating of tensions with the DPRK. Throughout 2017, we watched Trump's tweets and speeches, where he called Kim Jong-Un a "little rocket man," and declared that threats to the United States would be met with unprecedented fire and fury (TheGuardian, Trump says he'd never call Kim 'short and fat' in response to 'old' barb 2021). Kim Jong-Un, in turn, also did not skimp on expressions, stating that he would "tame the crazy old man with fire" (BBC, Kim Jong-un replied to Trump: "I will tame the crazy old man" 2017). It is noteworthy that, having brought the confrontation to the highest point, Trump retreated and tried to present himself as the injured party seeking a compromise. So, after Kim Jong-Un's comments, in which he called him a "crazy old man," Trump writes on Twitter: " Why would Kim Jong-Un insult me by calling me 'old,' when I would never call him 'short and fat?' Oh well, I try so hard to be his friend - and maybe someday that will happen!" (ABCNews, From 'fire and fury' to 'rocket man,' the various barbs traded between Trump and Kim Jong Un 2018). Thus, Trump took a step back, discrediting the North Korean leader at the same time. His manner of artificially bringing the conflict to an extreme point can be assessed in different ways, but the result was not long in coming and already in December 2017, Kim Jong-Un imposed a moratorium, and in 2018 the negotiation process of the two countries has begun. Of course, Trump's abilities cannot be considered the main reason that prompted Kim to change his foreign policy course, as in addition to the escalation of confrontation with the United States, the economic crisis was escalating in the DPRK, forcing the North Korean leader to take decisive measures. And yet Trump's tactics have proven effective.

As for the negotiations themselves, it is necessary to focus on changing the rhetoric of the leaders of the United States and the DPRK. Mutual insults and threats were replaced by statements about friendly relations and prospects for normalization of relations between the two countries. It was impossible to reach any agreement in such a short period of time or get closer to solving the North Korean nuclear missile crisis, so in this process it was extremely important for Trump to show the world and his people not only his diplomatic successes and progress, which has not yet been in the history of US-DPRK relations, but also demonstrate his personal relationship with Kim. For example,

at the NATO summit in 2019. Trump said that the United States and North Korea have peace, and Kim Jong-Un hardly had a better relationship with anyone than with him (TheAtlantic 2019). It was extremely important for him to create and reinforce the illusion that, thanks to his efforts, the world is no longer threatened by North Korea's nuclear program, so he regularly twitted about his strong friendship with Kim Jong-Un, the importance of their historic meetings and about their strong agreements. And even when in the summer of 2019 North Korea conducted short-range missile launches, he could not allow them to affect the success he achieved. In his tweet, he denied that these launches were a violation of their agreements and claimed that Kim Jong-un did not want to disappoint his friend President Trump (Insider 2019).

At the same time, it is argued that one of Trump's most popular tactics is to use his attractiveness. It is believed that people tend to trust a person who is similar to themselves and makes compliments, endearing people. During the election campaign, Trump did a lot of work on forming a positive image for his target audience - ordinary Americans who adhere to traditional values and do not agree with the modern agenda of the Democrats. That is why the speeches of the future president have always been expressive, easy to understand, filled with lexical images and calls to action (Oparina 2020). This tactic was also used by him in North Korean case. In an effort to demonstrate his good attitude, Trump did not skimp on compliments and spoke highly of Kim Jong-Un. Special attention should be paid here to the letters exchanged by the leaders. This correspondence caused a serious resonance because of the wording used by the presidents. In one of his letters to Kim Jong-Un, Trump, trying to emphasize their closeness and the presence of a common noble goal, wrote that together they can solve problems in the relations of their countries and put an end to the enmity that has lasted for almost 70 years, and also emphasized that Kim Jong-Un would lead this process (CNN, 'A magical force': New Trump-Kim letters provide window into their 'special friendship' 2020). He pays special attention to the personal relationship that has developed between them and does not skimp on grandiloquent words about the prospects of their friendship. Trump also stated that he was waiting for the day when North Korea will become a nuclear-free state, from which all sanctions would be lifted. And after that the world would be able to observe how it becomes one of the most successful countries in the world (Time, President Trump Suggests Third Summit With Kim Jong Un Saying Relations

Remain 'Very Good' 2019). Thus, Trump tried to emphasize his good intentions towards North Korea and his desire to do everything necessary to bring the country out of the crisis. His high-sounding phrases addressed to Kim Jong-Un confirm his intention to build personal relations with him in order to achieve a common goal. It was important for Trump to convince not only Kim, but also the public, whose support was necessary for the implementation of the new US foreign policy course to solving the DPRK nuclear problem. That is why their correspondence was published, and Trump himself regularly made statements about friendship and the prospects for the development of their relationship.

According to Trump, even now, when he no longer holds the post of US president, he continues to keep in touch with Kim Jong-Un (BBC 2022). Despite the fact that he does not specify the format of their communication and, moreover, this information cannot be verified, it is noteworthy here that even after the end of the presidential term, Trump has a need to maintain the image of a man who made a breakthrough in US-North Korean relations and established friendly ties with the dictator of an isolated country.

Thus, Trump, seeking to make history as the first successful businessman as president of the United States, did everything possible to conclude a unique deal with North Korea. His skills as a negotiator, which he claimed during his election campaign, allowed him to activate the negotiation process with Kim Jong-Un for several years. However, Trump's personal ambitions were not enough to achieve any meaningful agreement. Despite the changed rhetoric and a new approach to negotiations, the key differences remained the same. The negotiation process between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un has become an interesting and unique phenomenon in the history of relations between the two countries, which, nevertheless, has been nullified.

## **2.4. The role of John Bolton, Mike Pompeo and Stephen Biegun**

One of the most interesting and controversial features of Trump's presidency is his relationship with the US President's National Security Adviser John Bolton, who held this post from April 2018 to September 2019. Their joint work was based on the principle of "good cop, bad cop" (Ilias Kapoutsis n.d.). Acting as a "bad cop", Bolton was harsher and more categorical towards unfriendly countries. He advocated a tougher foreign policy course, while Trump focused his efforts on making profitable deals with the leaders of other states. In his interview with the Wall Street Journal, Trump admitted

that the only thing he liked about Bolton was that everyone thought he was crazy. According to Trump, his presence at the talks put the delegation in a winning position, since everyone was afraid of Bolton, who was ready to start a war with anyone (TheWallStreetJournal 2020).

In addition, the key difference between Trump and his national security adviser is their vision of the foreign policy decision-making process. Trump believed in the possibility of achieving success in the North Korean direction in a short time, as well as in the effectiveness of one-on-one negotiations with Kim Jong-un. Such a conviction that the responsibility for progress in the negotiation process lies solely with the leaders indicates that Trump was a supporter of the "top down approach". While John Bolton, having extensive experience in politics, fully relied on the "bottom up approach".

The consequence of these differences in the approaches of the president and his adviser to foreign policy issues was their disagreement on key issues – threats from Russia, North Korea and Iran. Trump highly valued personal relations with the leaders of many countries who, according to the official position of the US, posed a threat to US security, and was against the policy of pressure and threats against them. However, Bolton opposed the US "flirting with dictators," so his own rhetoric was always harsh and categorical (ABCNews, White House odd couple: Trump and Bolton's tumultuous relationship 2020). A striking example was his statement in April 2018 that the United States was considering using the "Libyan model" to solve the North Korean nuclear missile crisis (CNN, Bolton says US considering Libya model for North Korean denuclearization 2018). Such a parallel only inflamed the situation, as for the DPRK, the Libyan example has always been one of the arguments in favor of the fact that the United States cannot be trusted. Subsequently, Donald Trump criticized Bolton's position, saying that such words do not reflect his tough position, but are inappropriate and disastrous (Reuters, Trump says Bolton a 'disaster' on North Korea, 'out of line' on Venezuela 2019). Thus, there was an alarming situation when the official position of the president was at odds with the words and actions of his national security adviser.

Moreover, there are opinions that it was Bolton's irreconcilable position that caused the failure of the Trump-Kim talks in Hanoi. The reason for such discussions was the statement of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK Choe Son-hui, who after the summit said that Trump's position was quite flexible and the parties had the opportunity to agree, but John Bolton created

obstacles for constructive negotiations between the two leaders (Yonhap, Trump was open to easing sanctions at Hanoi summit: N.K. official 2019).

The reason for thinking that the discord in the presidential administration was only getting worse was the fact that during Donald Trump's visit to South Korea and a historic visit to the territory of the DPRK on June 30, 2019, his adviser was on a visit to Mongolia. On September 10, 2019, Trump posted a tweet announcing Bolton's resignation and thanking him for his service. He later said that this decision was made due to the fact that Bolton's position strongly differed from his own opinion and the opinion of many members of his administration (PBS 2019). Thus, it became obvious that the policy of "good cop, bad cop" is effective only during individual negotiations, but the situation when the government implements an uncoordinated policy is unacceptable and undermines the confidence of other countries in the US. Until recently, Trump did not lose hope of concluding one of the most significant agreements for the United States and the whole world and going down in history as the president who managed to find an approach to the unpredictable North Korean dictator and eliminated one of the main threats to international security. That is why he could not allow the statements of the expressive and hostile Bolton to discredit his foreign policy course and affect his personal relations with the leaders of other states, including Kim Jong-Un. Having dismissed the national Security adviser, Trump sought to implement his large-scale foreign policy plans until the last day of his presidential term.

It is worth noting that Bolton's resignation was not a unique case for the period of Trump's presidency. He preferred to get rid of officials who expressed their disagreement with him on any issue as soon as possible. Trump's goal was to sign a historic deal with the North Korean regime, so he could not allow his aides to interfere with him in this difficult task. During his tenure as president, there was a rapid change of US defense ministers: James Mattis (January 20, 2017 – January 1, 2019), Patrick Shanahan (acting Secretary of Defense January 1 – June 24, 2019), Mark Esper (July 23, 2019 – November 9, 2020) and Christopher Miller, appointed by Trump after his defeat in the 2020 presidential election. Such reshuffles meant that Trump, who sought to surround himself with people who supported his policy towards the DPRK, found it difficult to find support from his defense ministers, whose loyalty was necessary in the negotiation process with the DPRK.

However, there was also the reverse example of Mike Pompeo, who was loyal to Trump's plans and ambitions, thereby securing Trump's trust and a long tenure as Secretary of State. Trump explained the appointment to the post of Secretary of State Pompeo by the desire to see in this post someone who is on the same wavelength with him. By Trump's own admission, he "fully trusts Pompeo." Thus, CIA Director and a former Republican congressman, has become Trump's favorite. He fully supported Trump's policy towards North Korea and has even stated that he expects the denuclearization talks to be completed by the end of Trump's first term (ForeignPolicy 2018). Pompeo was a very important figure in US-North Korean relations under Trump: he visited Pyongyang several times, negotiated with senior North Korean officials, was responsible for preparing summits and accompanied Trump during the negotiations. He also gained a reputation as Trump's main defender as he constantly made statements justifying Trump's extravagant and ambiguous statements. When, after a series of missile launches by North Korea in the spring of 2019, Trump said that such actions by Kim were not a violation of their agreements and a deal would be concluded, Pompeo supported Trump. He said that the president is aware of the complexity of the situation, but he and his team continue to look for an opportunity to negotiate with Kim on denuclearization (Politico 2019).

Another important figure in Trump's North Korean policy and his supporter was Stephen Biegun. In August 2018, Mike Pompeo appointed him as the U.S. special representative for North Korea. Biegun held eight meetings with North Korean officials and accompanied Trump to the Hanoi summit, as well as during his meeting with Kim at the Demilitarized Zone. At the same time, he was one of those people who really believed that it was possible to negotiate the denuclearization of North Korea and fully supported Trump's diplomatic efforts in this direction. During Trump's presidential term, Pompeo and Biegun worked in tandem, jointly overseeing negotiations with North Korea and South Korea, discussing prospects for denuclearization and further development of cooperation.

Explaining his support for Trump's policy, Biegun said that Trump decided to test the seriousness of North Korean intentions, distancing himself from the historical hostility between the two countries. The North Koreans have been saying for years that it is possible to reach an agreement only at the level of leaders, so Trump has tested this in practice. Responding to criticism of Trump and concerns that he might conclude a deal unfavorable for the United States, the special representative

replied that the Hanoi summit showed that Trump had no such intentions and his policy was verified. Biegun was a proponent of the “top down approach” and believed that despite the difference in opinion in Congress and among the establishment on the North Korean issue, Trump, who was confident in his abilities, had the last word (Biegun 2021).

The main question is why the Trump team, which included people so loyal to him, seeking to make a deal with North Korea and improve US-North Korean relations, could not ultimately come to an agreement with North Korea. The main problem is that North Korea expected Pompeo and Biegun to take a fundamentally new approach to negotiations with North Korea. In fact, the North Koreans were not satisfied with any official who spoke about the need to maintain the sanctions regime until complete denuclearization, or at least until North Korea actually moves in this direction. So, for example, representatives of the DPRK have repeatedly asked to replace Pompeo with an official who will approach the negotiations between the two countries more carefully and treat the North Korean regime with great respect. They repeatedly blamed the failure of the Hanoi summit on either Bolton or Pompeo, demanding a new approach (BBC, North Korea demands removal of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo from talks 2019). However, there was no new approach. Even Trump, who was more eager to make a deal with the DPRK than anyone else, was not ready to take unilateral concessions. Since the statements of US officials involved in the negotiations are perceived by the North Koreans as sabotage of the negotiations, it is impossible to build an effective work even if the president's team is striving for it.

## **Conclusion**

There are many domestic political factors that can influence the choice of the government's foreign policy course. In the United States, the traditional factors influencing the policy of the presidential administration include congressional policy, inter-party contradictions, the activities of think tanks and the influence of the establishment. Each of them contributes to the formation of the political agenda and priorities of the American foreign policy course. Thus, congressmen, having the authority to develop and adopt bills, control the federal budget and ratify international treaties, actively use them to adjust US foreign policy strategies. The Congress has traditionally been dominated by either a complete lack of interest in the North Korean problem, or an extremely negative attitude

towards any concessions to the North Korean regime. Congress did not support President Trump's policy, preventing the possible easing of the sanctions regime or the signing of an agreement with North Korea, which, according to congressmen, would not be in the interests of the United States.

Another influential participant in the formation of the US foreign policy course are think tanks, whose activities are often aimed at providing the government with specific recommendations for the implementation of a certain political course. Lobbying the interests of any political groups makes them one of the most influential players in the United States, so each administration of the US president sought to involve them in the development of the country's foreign policy. However, the period of leadership of Donald Trump, who was inclined to make unpredictable decisions relying on his own instincts, became an exception and led to a situation that was described in the American press as the "death of think tanks."

The personality of President Trump can be distinguished as a separate factor that briefly changed the vector of US-North Korean relations. Despite the fact that his attitude to the North Korean issue was extremely unpopular, thanks to his skills and desire to go down in US history as the president who solved one of the most pressing and serious problems of international security, he managed to put the DPRK problem on the agenda. However, the lack of support in Congress, among the establishment and influential think tanks largely determined the fate of his North Korean policy from the point of view of American domestic policy and decision-making.

### **Chapter 3. The influence of domestic political factors in North Korea on the negotiation process with the US**

The political system of North Korea, being totalitarian by its nature, assumes the concentration of all power in the hands of its leader. However, based on the assumption that the foreign policy course of every country is formed not only by the will of the state leader, but also under the influence of domestic political factors, it is interesting to analyze whether it is possible to observe the influence of domestic political factors on the decisions of North Korean leader and to what extent domestic political factors in North Korea influenced the negotiation process of the DPRK and the United States. In the case of North Korea, when sources of information about the country's domestic policy are limited to publications of statements by the leader and officials, as well as individual news published by state media, the analysis of domestic political factors is based on data provided by international organizations, research and scientific centers and individual studies of scientists dealing with North Korean issues. However, not all of these sources provide reliable and verifiable information due to the closed nature of the North Korean system, so it is not possible to fully rely on this data.

The main domestic political factor that can influence the adoption of foreign policy decisions in the DPRK are economic sanctions. There are many studies claiming that it was the sanctions that prompted Kim Jong-un to start the negotiation process with the United States. Guided by this theory, it is necessary to determine the changes that have occurred in the DPRK economy since the introduction of sanctions and before the start of the negotiation process and to assess how much they could affect the country's foreign policy. Equally important is the assessment of the influence of the North Korean elite on foreign policy decisions. Today, in North Korea, in addition to the political elite, there are also entrepreneurs who have their own interests and expectations from the foreign policy course of the country's leadership. In this regard, it is important to identify these interests and assess how they can influence the dynamics of the negotiation process between the United States and the DPRK.

### **3.1. The impact of economic problems on the adoption of foreign policy decisions by the North Korean leadership.**

Today, the policy of imposing international economic sanctions against North Korea is one of the main mechanisms for exerting pressure on the leadership of the DPRK. The main purpose of the sanctions pressure is to influence the financial well-being of the North Korean elite. This method can be effective in the case of North Korea, which, despite the stated policy of "self-reliance" throughout the history of its existence, has been heavily dependent on foreign economic relations.

Since the introduction of UN Security Council Resolution 1718, which prescribed the introduction of the first package of sanctions against the North Korean regime in response to its nuclear tests on October 9, 2006, economic pressure on the DPRK has steadily increased. At the same time, the resolutions that were adopted before 2016 did not contribute to a significant deterioration of the economic situation in the DPRK, since most of the restrictions related to luxury goods and the provision of financial assistance to the DPRK in the form of concessional loans and subsidies. At the same time, the restrictions did not affect financial transactions that contributed to the denuclearization of the DPRK and the provision of humanitarian assistance to its population (V. Kim 2017).

However, the international community, realizing the ineffectiveness of existing sanctions against the background of the ongoing nuclear tests of the DPRK, in 2016 began to implement unprecedented tough sanctions pressure. UN Security Council Resolution 2270, adopted on March 2, 2016, imposed restrictions on trade in civilian goods, banning exports from the DPRK to UN member states of coal, iron, gold, vanadium, titanium, rare and rare earth metals. In addition, stricter restrictions were envisaged in the financial sector. The resolution banned UN member states from opening branches and representative offices of North Korean banks, as well as creating joint ventures with them, and obliged them to close all branches and representative offices of North Korean banks (Resolution 2270 (2016)). Six months later, the sanctions list was expanded by Resolution 2321, which banned the export of copper, silver, nickel and zinc from the DPRK, and also imposed specific restrictions on the total volume of North Korean coal exports, which could not exceed 7.5 tons per year (Resolution 2321 (2016) ). For North Korea, this meant a 50% reduction in exports of its main commodity. However, the tightening of the sanctions regime was not limited to these measures and in 2017, as a result of the

adoption of UN Security Council resolutions 2356, 2371, 2375 and 2397, the export of not only coal, but also seafood and textile industries, which in 2016 accounted for about 7% and 26% of the total exports of the DPRK, respectively, was completely banned. Thus, by the end of 2017, the main export goods of North Korea were banned, which should have significantly undermined the country's economy.

Conscientious compliance by all countries with the sanctions regime could indeed lead to the fact that the authorities would not be able to provide even the basic needs of the population. However, in fact, the effectiveness of sanctions directly depends on how much China complies with them, as China accounts for about 90% of the DPRK's foreign trade. China has no intention to refuse economic cooperation with North Korea for a long time, as it benefits the Chinese economy. China needs sales markets, and secondly, Chinese labor is gradually becoming more expensive, which forces Chinese manufacturers to pay attention to neighboring countries where these costs are lower, including the DPRK (J. C. Kim 2006). The PRC is the main investor in the DPRK economy and the main supplier of humanitarian aid, food, and energy. Until 2017, China maintained economic ties with North Korea, bypassing the sanctions regime and reserving this key mechanism of influence on the situation on the Korean peninsula. Nevertheless, the DPRK's rapid development of its nuclear potential in 2017 prompted the Chinese leadership to fully support the UN Security Council sanctions and suspend or significantly restrict trade with the DPRK in all directions. The deployment of the American THAAD missile defense system on the territory of South Korea, the escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula with the coming to power of Donald Trump and the introduction of US sanctions against Chinese banks and companies engaged in financial transactions with the DPRK, prompted China to reconsider its approach to North Korea towards a tougher course in order for it to abandon provocative actions that represent a threat to the security of China itself.

Another factor that gives the PRC an important leverage over the North Korean leadership is that it controls the Dandong-Sinuiju oil pipeline, which almost completely meets the needs of the CNDD. According to the data provided by the China National Petroleum Corporation, the annual volume of crude oil supplied to the DPRK is about 520,000 tons, but it is obvious that the actual volume of supplies may be much larger (TheKoreaTimes 2017). Even if we take into account the assumptions

that Russia, in addition to petroleum products, also supplies North Korea with crude oil through China, the volume of these supplies cannot be compared with China's supplies. Thus, the economy and nuclear weapons of the DPRK, in the production of which Chinese crude oil is used, directly depend on what policy the Chinese leadership chooses towards North Korea. It was as a result of the actions of the PRC in 2017 North Korea has fully felt the effects of international sanctions pressure.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the DPRK's import substitution capabilities are extremely limited for a number of reasons. Firstly, the natural landscape of North Korea is not conducive to the active development of the agricultural sector. The total area of the DPRK is 12 million hectares. At the same time, 75% of the area is hilly or mountainous, and arable land accounts for only 19% (TheWorldBank 2018). In addition, 70% of the land on which agricultural activities are carried out is located in the southwestern coastal zone of North Korea, namely in the Chungnam, Jeonbuk and Jeonnam areas, which often suffer from floods (W.-K. Kim n.d.). This fact, along with low temperatures and a short growing season, increase the risks of low crop yields. In this regard, the policy of import substitution, which could reduce the damage from sanctions pressure, cannot be implemented by the forces of the agricultural sector of the DPRK.

In the current situation, when the policy of "self-reliance" in the agricultural sector could not produce results in the field of agriculture due to the geographical and climatic conditions of the country, the introduction of sanctions in 2016-2017 seriously undermined the civilian sector of the economy and significantly complicated the life of the North Korean people (UN, Security council condemns nuclear test by DPRK, unanimously adopting resolution 1718 (2006) 2006). The UN Security Council has repeatedly confirmed that the measures provided for in the Resolutions are not intended to cause a humanitarian crisis in the DPRK, but official UN documents regularly highlight the negative consequences of sanctions. UN Security Council resolution 2375 (2017) mentions the findings of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance that more than half of the DPRK's population suffers from serious food and medical shortages, including a very large number of pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of five who are at risk of malnutrition, and almost a quarter the entire population of the country suffers from chronic malnutrition (UN, Resolution 2375 (2017) 2017). At the same time, on August 3, 2017, UN Secretary General A. Guterres presented

a report in which he noted that the 2016 Resolution had negative consequences for UN humanitarian organizations. He recommended providing support to the institutions of the Organization that work in the DPRK and ensuring stable financing of humanitarian assistance activities (UN, Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Report of the Secretary-General. 2017).

North Korea is rich in its natural resources. The basis of North Korean exports is coal and other minerals, including magnesite, zinc, iron, tungsten ore, graphite, gold, barite, apatite and molybdenum (Choi 2011). North Korea has historically been a world leader in the export of anthracite coal, most of which was sent to China. Coal exports from the country brought in just over \$400 million (about 22% of total exports in terms of revenue) in 2017, compared with \$1.2 billion (about 40% of total exports) in 2016 (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2018).

According to the Bank of Korea, in 2016, the share of the extractive industry accounted for 12.6% of the total GDP, and the total share of industry reached 33.2% (Figure 1) (Bank of Korea, Gross Domestic Product Estimates for North Korea in 2017 2018). Thus, the tightening of the sanctions regime in 2017 led to a ban on the export of the main resources that the DPRK is rich in.

In 2017 and 2018, the GDP reduction amounted to 3.5 and 4.1%, respectively (Figure 2). The decline in the extractive industry exceeded 17%. Thus, in 2017, sanctions have already clearly begun to affect the economy. The effect of the sanctions pressure was especially noticeable in coal production. Coal is not only the basis of the DPRK's energy complex, but also provided up to 30% of the country's export earnings before the sanctions were imposed. Among the restrictive measures of the December 2017 UN resolution, there is a ban on the export of this type of fuel to the DPRK. Compared to 2016, when the peak in its production was reached, by 2018 the output decreased by at least 40% (Figure 2) (Bank of Korea, Gross Domestic Product Estimates for North Korea in 2018 2019). This suggests that the DPRK has lost this part of export earnings. It is very likely that the decline in coal production also affects the stability of domestic electricity generation for the needs of the population and industry.

**Figure 1. North Korean Industrial Structure (Bank of Korea, 2017)**

	North Korea		
	2015	2016	2017
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	21.6	21.7	22.8
Mining & manufacturing	32.7	33.2	31.8
Mining	12.2	12.6	11.7
Manufacturing	20.4	20.6	20.1
(Light industry)	(7.0)	(6.9)	(6.8)
(Heavy & chemical industry)	(13.4)	(13.7)	(13.3)
Electricity, gas & water supply	4.5	5.2	5.0
Construction	9.0	8.8	8.6
Services	32.2	31.1	31.7
(Government)	(23.3)	(22.4)	(23.2)
(Other services <sup>2)</sup> )	(8.9)	(8.7)	(8.4)
GDP	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: (Gross Domestic Product Estimates for North Korea in 2017 2018)

**Figure 2. North Korean real GDP Growth, by Industry (Bank of Korea, 2018)**

	North Korea		
	2016	2017	2018
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	2.5	-1.3	-1.8
Mining & manufacturing	6.2	-8.5	-12.3
Mining	8.4	-11.0	-17.8
Manufacturing	4.8	-6.9	-9.1
(Light industry)	(1.1)	(0.1)	(-2.6)
(Heavy & chemical industry)	(6.7)	(-10.4)	(-12.4)
Electricity, gas & water supply	22.3	-2.9	5.7
Construction	1.2	-4.4	-4.4
Services	0.6	0.5	0.9
(Government)	(0.6)	(0.8)	(0.8)
(Other services <sup>1)</sup> )	(0.5)	(-0.3)	(1.2)
GDP	3.9	-3.5	-4.1

Source: (Gross Domestic Product Estimates for North Korea in 2018 2019)

It is also worth noting that despite the wide list of natural resources that the DPRK is rich in, there are no oil and gas reserves in the country, and anthracite coal cannot be used as fuel. UN Security Council Resolution 2397 of December 22, 2017 restricted the import of DPRK crude oil to 4 million barrels and 500 thousand barrels of petroleum products per year. It was expected that an 89% reduction in oil imports would lead to a serious transport crisis, which, in turn, would cause the decline of the North Korean economy as a whole (S.-J. Kim 2021). Despite the fact that since 2018 North Korea

actively resorted to illegal fuel supplies to the country, which prevented a serious decline in the DPRK's transport capabilities in the short term, such a method of providing the country with energy resources is not reliable and is not able to meet the country's energy needs for economic and nuclear development in the long term.

For many years, the export of North Korean labor has supported the economy of North Korea. The income from labor migration not only provided workers and their families, but also provided financial support to the North Korean government. The Database Center for North Korean Human Rights has published a report "Human rights and foreign workers of North Korea: dilemmas and Political challenges", in which 20 workers from the KDNR were interviewed and the conditions for sending North Korean labor abroad were considered in detail. According to the study, by 2015, approximately 50 000 – 60 000 workers were sent to work abroad, which brought the North Korean government about 1.2-2.3 billion dollars a year. Despite the fact that the traditional direction of labor migration of North Koreans was Russia and China, they also worked in forty countries of the Middle East, Africa and Europe, including Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Nigeria and Poland. Most North Koreans were employed in the mining, logging, textile and construction industries (Yoon Yeo-Sang 2015).

According to the report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, Marzuki Darusman, the leadership of the DPRK, faced with a difficult economic situation, used its labor force abroad as a stable source of income. He said that the North Korean government violates human rights by forcing its citizens to work and thus attracting foreign currency. Darumsan also stressed that while working abroad, North Korean workers were constantly under surveillance and were also forced to work more than 12 hours almost seven days a week (TheGuardian, North Korea putting thousands into forced labour abroad, UN says 2015).

Taking into account this loophole in the sanctions policy of "maximum pressure", UN Security Council Resolution 2397 (2017) ordered all countries to send North Korean workers back to the DPRK within two years after signing the resolution. Thus, the sanctions affected all legal sources of financing of the North Korean government without any exceptions. Of course, under the sanctions pressure the DPRK has begun to actively resort to the shadow import and export, cybercrime and fraud with

cryptocurrency. However, given the rapid deterioration of economic indicators in the DPRK, such activities of North Korea are not proof of the ineffectiveness of sanctions pressure.

In addition, the sanctions imposed against the DPRK have become an obstacle to the implementation of the 2016-2020 five-year plan. At the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, held from January 5-12, 2021, Kim Jong-Un admitted that the five-year plan had not been implemented in almost all fields. He explained this failure in the development of the country's economy by serious domestic and foreign policy challenges that the country has been facing in recent years. Now radical changes are taking place in the North Korean economy – the country is moving from a policy of granting greater independence to entrepreneurs and agricultural workers to a policy of strengthening party leadership in all sectors of the economy, which Kim Jong-Un announced at the congress (Hong 2021). Such changes indicate the deepest economic crisis that North Korea is experiencing, and raise concerns about the further development of the country.

It is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic was a serious blow to the North Korean economy, which by that time had already been undermined by the sanctions regime. In an effort to protect its people from this new virus, the DPRK leadership decided to suspend transport links with foreign countries and restrict the import of goods in January 2020. At the end of August 2020, it was still possible to import certain goods, having received the permission of the leadership of the Emergency Anti-Epidemic Committee of the DPRK, but in the fall almost all imports were banned. Such strict measures led to even greater problems in the North Korean economy, among which the most critical was the reduction in the volume of trade between the DPRK and its main partner, the PRC, which led to a shortage of foreign currency, a reduction in the production of North Korean enterprises, as well as a reduction in the volume of the DPRK market (Hong 2021).

However, in 2019, against the background of normalization of the situation on the Korean peninsula and escalation of the trade war with the United States, China restored trade with North Korea and allowed North Korean workers to return to Chinese factories bypassing the sanctions regime. The PRC stopped fully implementing sanctions against North Korea and maintained economic cooperation until the North Korean leadership closed its borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic (YonhapNews 2019). Thus, since 2019, North Korea has not had such a strong incentive to maintain the negotiation

process with the United States as in 2017, when China decided to comply with sanctions against the DPRK in full.

After the detection of COVID-19 cases in the DPRK in May 2022, significant prerequisites for the opening of the country appeared. Now North Korea is in dire need of medicines and vaccines, which it cannot provide itself with on its own due to the limited capabilities of North Korean medicine sector. Thus, according to a study by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Safety, North Korea ranks 193rd among 195 countries in the ability to prevent, detect and cope with epidemics (YonhapNews, N. Korea ranks 193rd out of 195 countries in ability to cope with epidemic 2019). It is important to understand that this rating cannot reliably reflect the real picture of the North Korean healthcare system. The DPRK practically does not provide reports to WHO or other international organizations, which, in turn, cannot now fully carry out their monitoring activities in North Korea. However, looking at the difficulties faced by countries with well-developed economies in combating the COVID-19 epidemic, it can be concluded that North Korea, where the problem of a humanitarian crisis still persists, will not be able to cope with the outbreak of the virus without intensifying cooperation with foreign countries and subsequently establishing a mechanism for the supply of foreign vaccines and medicines.

At the same time, long before the detection of cases of COVID-19 infection in the DPRK, its leadership was offered assistance, including the supply of vaccines, from Russia, China, South Korea and the United States, as well as from the international organization COVAX, which operates under the WHO. However, the North Korean authorities have not yet officially resorted to this assistance and have not opened the borders. The aggravation of the epidemiological situation in the DPRK has prompted some South Korean analysts to start talking about the possibilities of activating "vaccine diplomacy" with North Korea, which could contribute to the country's exit from international isolation and the resumption of inter-Korean and US-Korean dialogue. Thus, the director of the Center for North Korean Studies of the South Korean Sejong Institute said that inter-Korean cooperation in the field of healthcare could lead to a defusing of tensions on the Korean peninsula, which we have seen recently, as well as the intensification of humanitarian cooperation between the two countries (Reuters, North Korea gets offers of aid to fight COVID as it lacks vaccines 2022). However, there is a possibility that it is the possible politicization of medical care in the DPRK that has become the main reason for the

refusal of its leadership from supplies. In this case, this fact serves as a clear proof that the national interests in the sphere of politics and ensuring the national security of the DPRK are a priority of the North Korean leadership. If North Korea really decides to establish supplies of vaccines and medicines to combat the spread of COVID-19 in the country, it is most likely that China and Russia will become suppliers, which have repeatedly stated their readiness to provide their vaccines to the North Koreans.

Taking into account the decline in economic indicators, which we discussed above, we can say that the decision of the North Korean government to break out of international isolation and intensify the negotiation process with the United States falls at a time of a strong reduction in the main economic indicators. It is obvious that the use of shadow methods of income generation not only cannot ensure stable economic growth of the country, but also is not able to meet the basic needs of the population. In this situation, the only solution was to start the negotiation process in the hope of concessions from the international community and, first of all, the United States, which would lead to the country's exit from economic isolation. However, in reality, North Korea was not ready to make big concessions on the issue of denuclearization, even in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. This means that North Korea was not ready to put economic interests above the need to preserve its nuclear potential. The situation is further aggravated by the violation of the sanctions regime by China, which provides economic assistance to the DPRK, depriving it of the need to make concessions on the issue of denuclearization.

### **3.2. The role of the elite in the activation of diplomatic contacts between the DPRK and the United States**

While discussing the influence of domestic political factors on the negotiation process between North Korea and the US, it is necessary to take into account the intra-elite alignment of forces and its attitude to this issue. The source of the legitimacy of the government and the last authority in making any political decisions is the leader. The preservation by the leader of full control over party and political activities is a necessary condition for the survival of the North Korean regime. An important role is played by the North Korean military and political elite, whose support and cohesion around the regime also supports its existence.

After Kim Jong-Il's death in 2011, among the elite surrounding Kim Jong-Un the most significant figures were his father's sister Kim Kyong-Hui, her husband and influential politician Jang Sung-Thaek, as well as the statesman and military figure Choe Ryong-hae. However, already in December 2013 Jang Sung-Thaek was removed from the post of deputy chairman of the State Defense Committee of the DPRK and head of the department of the Central Committee of the CPC, arrested and sentenced to death (Gause 2014). Such an unexpected step to eliminate one of the most influential members of the North Korean elite, who was supposed to become Kim Jong-Un's mentor at the very beginning of his leadership, is a real confirmation that Kim Jong-Un sought to surround himself with people who owed their appointment not to his father, but to him personally. The North Korean regime is based on the unwavering loyalty of the elite to the leader; therefore, party purges were necessary so that at the beginning of the formation of his political course, the young leader would find full support among his confidants.

This is also confirmed by the example of the resignation of the Vice-Marshall of the KPA, Ri Yong-ho, who was one of the top five party leaders at the time of Kim Jong-Un's accession to office. Ri Yong-ho often accompanied Kim Jong-Un and his father at state events during Kim Jong-Il's lifetime, and after his death, he was supposed to become the military mentor of young Kim Jong-Un (Zhebin 2012). However, on July 15, 2012, at a meeting of the Politburo of the Workers' Party of North Korea Lee Yongho was unexpectedly removed from all his positions. Later, Kim Jong-Un explained this decision, saying that history teaches us that soldiers who are not loyal to the party and the leader turn into traitors to the revolution (T.-K. Kim 2018). The examples of Ri Yong-ho and Jang Sung-Thaek confirm the fact that the North Korean political elite is not protected from party purges and imprisonment, regardless of the degree of their proximity to the leader and military-political merits. Such a demonstrative crackdown on top government officials was a necessary measure for Kim Jong-Un, who needed to demonstrate his determination and intransigence, as well as prevent any possible attempts by members of the elite to express their distrust of the new leader.

Kim Jong-Un's desire to take control of the influential military elite of the DPRK is also noteworthy. A distinctive feature of his leadership is regular personnel changes in the ranks of senior military and officials. This can be explained by Kim Jong-Un's desire to strengthen his control over

the military elite and appoint military loyal to him to key positions. Ri Myong-Su, who was a confidant of Kim Jong-Il and served as head of the Ministry of Social Security, was removed from office by Kim Jong-Un in 2013 and replaced by General Choi Pu-Il. However, in 2016, Ri Myong-Su was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the KPA and promoted to the rank of Vice Marshal. But just two years later, 2 weeks before the Singapore summit of the DPRK and the United States, which took place on June 12, 2018, he was again removed from office. A similar situation occurred in the case of representatives of the military elite of Kim Jong-Gak and Park Yong-Sik. In April 2012, Kim Jong-Gak took over the post of Defense Minister of the DPRK, but in November he was removed from office. In February 2018, he was appointed to the post of head of the DPRK Politburo. Park Yong-Sik, who served as chief of defense under Kim Jong-Il but was later fired by Kim Jong-un, was also later reappointed to a senior position. Since June 2015, he has been the Minister of the People's Armed Forces of the DPRK, but was removed on the eve of the US-North Korean summit along with Ri Myong-Su and Kim Jong-Gak (Council on Foreign Relations 2020).

There are several assumptions that explain the frequent personnel changes among the top North Korean military and officials. According to one of them, such changes in the ranks of the military elite of the DPRK are associated with the resistance of Park Yong-Sik, Ri Myong-Su and Kim Jong-Gak to the peace process with the United States and South Korea. In order to reach an agreement, Kim Jong-Un needed to reduce the influence of the military elite by appointing people loyal to his plans and sharing his idea of the need to intensify the negotiation process with the United States and the ROK to key positions. It was that most popular theory in the Western and South Korean press (DW 2018).

There have also been suggestions in the South Korean press that Kim Jong-Un's policy of reducing the influence of the military and forming a party-oriented state means the state's reversal from militaristic policy. After Kim took office, the influence of the military elite decreased, and the influence of the economic elite and the party increased dramatically. Frequent personnel changes allow him to exercise maximum control over the military elite. It was noted that this could have a positive impact on inter-Korean relations and progress on the issue of denuclearization of the DPRK, since negotiations will meet less obstacles if the decision is made not in military, but in party circles (연합뉴스, [연합시론] 北 국정운영 긍정적 변화 신호에 주목한다 2018).

There is also a version that these changes were carried out in order to send a clear signal to the United States that Kim Jong-Un is open to discussing denuclearization and is purging the ranks of the military elite for unhindered cooperation on reducing the DPRK's nuclear potential (Kim Jong Un 'fires North Korea's top three military generals' 2018). It is likely that Kim Jong-un could have carried out such a significant personnel coup in the highest military circles on the eve of the summit in order to demonstrate to the United States his readiness to take steps towards negotiations. The replacement of personnel could really have been carried out with a demonstrative purpose in order to show the United States what resistance Kim Jong-Un meets in the issue of denuclearization. Such manipulations, in theory, could have a positive impact on Washington.

In current North Korean reality, a scenario in which the removal of the military may be associated with their opposition to the current course of the country's leader seems unlikely. From the very beginning of his leadership, Kim Jong-Un pursued a policy of strict control and intimidation of the military and party elite, so it is difficult to assume that the position of any official or military holding a leadership position may differ from the position of the leader and even more so to resist it. The system that developed under Kim Jong-Un really helped him to strengthen the party's position over military structures.

It is important to understand that the arguments about the presence of any opposition in the circles of the North Korean elite have no real evidence. On the contrary, the functioning of the North Korean regime for so many years would have been impossible without the elite's interest in its existence. The unity around the North Korean regime can be explained by the awareness of the political elite of possible risks in case of the regime's fall. Losing control of the country and unifying South and North Korea would have an extremely negative impact on North Korean officials for several reasons. Firstly, there is a "Committee for the Five Northern Korean Provinces" in South Korea, which, according to the official position of South Korea, is the only legitimate government of the territories in the north of the Korean peninsula. In the event of an uprising in North Korea and the reunification of both territories of the peninsula, a scenario in which former officials of the North Korean regime will have access to power is more than unlikely. Moreover, it is appropriate to assume that in the event of the unification of the two Koreas under the condition of an uprising in North Korea, the North Korean elite, which

has been repeatedly accused of violating human rights, will not only be removed from the leadership, but also convicted of crimes committed.

It is also worth noting that the business elite, which under the leadership of Kim Jong-un received new opportunities for business development, is also not interested in regime change and unification with South Korea. Despite the fact that now many enterprises have gained more freedom in the implementation of their entrepreneurial activities, ties with the political elite are still an important condition for successful development, which explains the similarity of interests of the business and political elites of North Korea. In the event of the unification of the two Koreas, South Korean firms will begin to actively develop their business in the north of the Korean Peninsula, which will also be a negative scenario for North Korean businessmen. It is obvious that any South Korean company, regardless of its size and success, is many times superior to North Korean firms. The dominance of technological and modern South Korean firms will lead to the collapse of almost any North Korean business (Lankov, *Survival Strategies of the North Korean Elite* 2020).

Despite the fact that regardless of the desires of the elite, the leader always has the last word, the entrepreneurs are most interested in activating the negotiation process of the DPRK and the United States and the country's exit from international isolation. The North Korean business elite began to form during the severe economic crisis in the DPRK in the late 1990s. During this difficult period for the country, the government was not able to provide the people with enough food and services, so ways were opened for the development of trade on the black market. The government of Kim Jong-Il has transferred responsibility for economic management to local authorities, enterprises and farms to ensure their own production and consumption. Over time, restrictions on such activities decreased more and more (Council on Foreign Relations 2020).

Kim Jong-Un, who sought to preserve and develop his father's achievements in the field of nuclear development and maintaining of the North Korean regime in the conditions of the collapse of the socialist bloc and the difficult economic situation, was aware of the need for active development of the country's economy. To ensure a balance of priorities, on April 15, 2012, he announced that the North Korean people would no longer face the difficulties that they experienced during the "difficult march", and on June 28, 2012, the introduction of the 'New Economic Management System in Our

Own Style. These measures gave greater autonomy to the agricultural and light industrial sectors, which are the main branches of the national economy. A year later, the policy of "parallel development" of the country's nuclear potential and its economy, which was called *byungjin*, was officially introduced. Thus, under Kim Jong-un, North Korea began to move away from the *songun* "military first" policy that determined the direction of the DPRK under Kim Jong-Il and Kim Il-Song (Kong 2019).

In 2014, the North Korean government's priority for economic development through the strengthening of the private sector was enshrined in amendments to the DPRK Enterprise Law. These amendments expanded the rights of directors of enterprises to participate in foreign trade, create joint ventures, and also provided them with the opportunity to attract investments from private investors (Ward 2017 ).

These measures gave an impetus to the development of "unplanned" independence of entrepreneurs and their private initiative. A distinctive feature of the modern economic system of the DPRK is also the fact that at the present stage of development of the North Korean private sector, agricultural cooperatives can freely dispose of 40-50% of their products. Moreover, in 2010 satellite images indicated the existence of 200 permanent trading platforms in North Korea, and by 2018 their number had more than doubled and reached about 480 (A.Lankov 2020).

Now North Korea is in complete economic isolation, so private business, which has received more freedom of hands from the government, cannot fully develop its potential, limiting its foreign economic activity to cooperation with China. Despite the fact that some North Korean entrepreneurs began selling goods to other countries through China, the sanctions regime made it impossible for North Korean entrepreneurs to fully participate in foreign trade and nullified their cooperation with foreign investors (A.Lankov 2020). The situation has further worsened because of the closure of the DPRK borders in January 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The "self-isolation" of North Korea, which led to the suspension of the already damaged imports and exports of goods, nullified any international trade of Korean entrepreneurs. Under the current conditions, Kim Jong-Un's policy of intensifying diplomatic activities in order to reduce sanctions pressure is the most attractive scenario for entrepreneurs of the DPRK. Taking into account the fact that now the share of the shadow economy in the DPRK can reach from 30-50% of GDP, we can say that the interests of entrepreneurs supporting

this sector of the economy from the desire of the ruling elite to provide the necessary conditions for its development. Kim Jong-Un, who from the very beginning of his leadership adhered to the strategy of moving away from the "songun" policy towards priority economic development with parallel preservation and development of the country's nuclear potential, seeks to develop and deepen limited and state-controlled, but nevertheless separate market transformations in the country. The experience of the "difficult campaign", which fell during the period of his father's leadership, made it clear that the policy of self-reliance and the concentration of resources on the development of nuclear potential without effective economic development can lead to harmful consequences for the people (Yan 2019).

However the elite's concerns about the maintaining of the regime and national security leads us to believe that there is hardly a single person among the North Korean elite who would support the denuclearization of North Korea. North Koreans perceive nuclear weapons as a guarantee of preserving their country's independence, and the North Korean elite as a guarantee of preserving the regime, so the discussion of denuclearization in exchange for economic benefits will certainly meet resistance in North Korean elite.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, we have identified two main domestic political factors that influence the negotiation process of the United States and the DPRK – the impact of the 2016-2017 sanctions and China's role in it and the role of the North Korean elite and personally its leader on the formation of the DPRK's foreign policy while maintaining the priority of national security issues and the preservation of the regime. The peculiarity of the North Korean economy lies in the fact that despite the "self-reliance" policy declared in documents and speeches, in fact, North Korea, which has been an active participant in international economic relations all previous years, is heavily dependent on foreign trade in the development of its economic and nuclear potential. The transition that took place under Kim Jong-Un's leadership from the "songun" policy (priority development of the military industry) to the "punjin" policy, which involves the parallel development of the North Korean economy and nuclear potential, led to qualitative changes in the structure of the Korean economy, providing greater freedom for entrepreneurial activity. It was extremely important for Kim Jong-un to preserve the legitimacy of his power by improving the economic situation in the country and preventing a serious economic crisis

like the one that North Korea faced during the leadership of his father Kim Jong-il. However, the parallel development of nuclear weapons, which remain a guarantee of the preservation of the regime itself, led to serious sanctions pressure from the international community, including compliance with the sanctions regime by the DPRK's main trading partner, China, which predetermined the future fate of the country's economic development. That is why, at the present stage, economic interests are important in determining the foreign policy course of the state. The North Korean elite fully supports Kim Jong-Un's diplomatic steps aimed at overcoming economic isolation. However, taking into account the fact that the main condition for the lifting of sanctions against North Korea is denuclearization, it becomes obvious that negotiations with the United States cannot bring the desired results for the DPRK as a whole and for its elite in particular. Despite the interest in the development of entrepreneurship, the protection of the national security of the state and its regime remains the main priority. That is why today there are no conditions under which North Korea would be willing to give up the development of its nuclear potential, even in exchange for economic benefits.

# Conclusion

The negotiation process between the US and North Korea, accompanied by diplomatic successes and failures, has been going on for more than 20 years, but the prospects for reaching a fundamentally new level of cooperation are being questioned. Since Donald Trump took office as US president in 2017, US-North Korean relations have undergone significant changes. The mutual threats and insults that came from the leaders against each other throughout 2017 were replaced by the holding of two summits in 2018 and 2019, as well as a meeting of leaders in Panmunjom, where the US president for the first time in history crossed the border between the two Koreas. However, even such an unprecedented intensification of diplomatic contacts between the two countries did not bring them closer to resolving the North Korean nuclear missile crisis.

Analyzing the reasons for the failure of the negotiation process between the United States and the DPRK during the presidency of Donald Trump, it is necessary to pay attention to the domestic political factors that influenced the positions of both countries. It is important to understand that during the negotiation process, the country's position is formed not only by the political will of its leader, but also by the country's foreign policy course, which is influenced by a number of domestic political factors. That is why they must be taken into account in ensuring stability and security on the Korean peninsula and in the Northeast Asia region.

In the case of the US, the traditional factors that influence the policy of the presidential administration include the influence of Congress and establishment, inter-party contradictions, and the participation of think tanks in decision-making. Lack of interest in North Korean problem in the US Congress and think tanks, which are traditionally active participants in the formation of the country's foreign policy interests, prevented the proactive Trump from promoting the North Korean agenda. Criticizing Trump's policies and using their budgetary and sanctions powers as mechanisms to influence the government, congressmen did everything their powers allowed them to prevent the ambitious Trump from making concessions to the North Korean regime and making a deal that would infringe on the interests of the United States. Even the support of Mike Pompeo and Stephen Biegun did not help him. Trump's refusal to cooperate with US think tanks, which since the Bush

administration have had a strong influence on the formation of US foreign policy priorities, deprived Trump of the support of the expert community, which is necessary for making decisions on such a controversial and complex issue.

In the DPRK, domestic political factors that can influence the country's foreign policy course include its economic situation, which has become more complicated after the introduction of international economic sanctions, as well as the role of the North Korean elite consolidated around the leader. The North Korean leader has full power in decision-making and controls all state and party processes. However, maintaining the legitimacy of the regime for such a long time would be impossible without the cohesion of the North Korean elite, which seeks to support the existence of the regime, aware of the possible risks of its collapse. Despite the fact that officially North Korea continues to declare its adherence to the course of "self-reliance", the country directly depends on foreign economic relations and humanitarian assistance. As a result of the sanctions pressure, the people of the DPRK are suffering not only from a serious shortage of energy resources necessary for the operation of various enterprises, but also from an acute shortage of food and medical care. In addition, being in complete economic isolation, private business, which has received more freedom in its activities from the government, cannot fully develop its potential.

These economic difficulties prompted the North Korean leader to intensify diplomatic contacts with the United States. Throughout the negotiation process, Kim Jong-Un demanded the easing of the sanctions regime, which would allow the country to escape international economic isolation. However, North Korea faced the principled position of the United States, which did not intend to lift any part of the economic sanctions without a complete verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the DPRK. Even the closure of the nuclear complex in Yongbyon, which Kim Jong-Un announced in order to convince Trump of his willingness to make concessions, was not enough to ease the sanctions regime. It is obvious that the US would not lose its most important leverage against the North Korean regime in exchange for shutting down one of its many nuclear facilities.

However, North Korea cannot make significant concessions on the issue of denuclearization. The North Korean people, and above all its elite, are interested in preserving the security of the North Korean regime. The cohesion of the elite around the government regime is mainly due to the awareness

of the risks that its collapse may entail. In the event of the fall of the regime and the unification of South and North Korea, neither the political nor the business elite will be in an advantageous position. That is why there is a high consolidation of the political and business elite in North Korea, which supports the North Korean regime and the development of nuclear potential as the main mechanism for maintaining the security and independence of their country.

Thus, it becomes clear that domestic political factors did not allow countries to make the concessions necessary for effective cooperation and the conclusion of any agreement. Now, in conditions when North Korea continues to adhere to the principle of self-supporting national security based on nuclear forces, and the United States is not ready to make a deal with a nuclear North Korea, no significant changes can occur in relations between the two countries. Even the political will of Kim Jong-Un and Trump to conclude a deal that would reduce tension not only in relation to the two countries, but also in the region as a whole, could not change the current situation.

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