

Trump should propose direct talks with N. Korea: U.S. expert

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Incoming U.S. President Donald Trump should propose direct negotiations with North Korea and offer a package of economic and political benefits to the communist nation in exchange for restricting its nuclear and missile activities, a U.S. expert said.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, said in a recent article in the National Interest that a new approach is necessary as the North is expected to pose one of the most difficult challenges for the Trump administration.

Sanctions cannot resolve the problem due to China's reluctance to push its communist neighbor hard, and military strikes would be too costly as Pyongyang could inflict tremendous damage on Seoul before succumbing, he said.

"Necessary is a new approach. Propose negotiations, including bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang, over more limited issues, such as restrictions on nuclear activities, conventional weapons pullbacks, other confidence-building steps and diplomatic recognition," Bandow said.

"Offer a benefits package that addresses the North's security, as well as economic requirements," he said.

The expert also noted that the North's young leader Kim Jong-un is doing "what his father and grandfather refused to do: listen to the Chinese and institute economic reform, while maintaining tight political control."

"After all, that was how Deng Xiaoping set China on its present course," he said. "Alas, Kim also is determined to possess nuclear weapons. After only five years on the job, he is well on his way to achieving a nuclear armed state with better economic development."

The expert said that Kim's "byeongjin" policy of pursuing nuclear and economic development at the same time appears to be succeeding, despite international opprobrium and sanctions, with the economy growing and missile and nuclear tests making progress.

"North Korea is likely to pose one of the most difficult challenges for the Trump administration. It won't take long for President Donald Trump to discover that sloganeering isn't likely to prove nearly as useful as president as it did as presidential candidate," Bandow said.

In his New Year's address, Kim said the North has reached the final stage of preparations to test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in a veiled threat that it's about to develop a nuclear missile capable of reaching the U.S.

In response, the State Department said that any launches by the North using ballistic missile technology are unacceptable as they are explicitly banned under multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, vowing to take steps to show Pyongyang consequences of such unlawful tests.

U.S. experts have warned that the communist nation could undertake provocations around the time that Trump takes office on Jan. 20, noting Pyongyang has a record of staging provocations around U.S. elections and transition periods.