



We Seem to Forget Something Big When We Talk About North Korea

Fareed Zakaria

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As the US media dissects [President Trump's nuclear button tweet](#) – and the possibility of conflict – it too often overlooks something important about the crisis on the Korean Peninsula, writes [Christian Caryl in the Washington Post](#): South Korea.

“Few of us seem to grasp that South Korea is a thriving democracy and an industrial powerhouse of 50 million people that has been one of our closest allies for the past seven decades. Thirty-six thousand US troops died helping the United Nations defend the South from northern aggression in 1950-1953. None of which, of course, prevents us from indulging in our habitual obliviousness toward yet another faraway country,” Caryl writes.

“The simple fact of the matter—and it can't be repeated enough—is that North Korea is still a long way from being able to wage war against the continental United States. If war begins, it's not heartland Americans who will pay the price. It's South Koreans.

“Unless you've been to the military line of demarcation that divides North and South Korea—and which Trump managed to miss on his recent trip to the peninsula—you might find it hard to imagine how entangled the two countries' fates remain today. Greater Seoul, a megalopolis of 25 million people, is just 35 minutes away from the border with the North—one reason that a Pentagon war game reportedly determined that the onset of war would kill 20,000 people in the South each day it continued.”

- **What we get wrong about diplomacy with the Kims.** Diplomacy can still resolve the North Korea crisis. The United States shouldn't allow a

misunderstanding of past efforts to mean warcraft trumps statecraft, suggests **John Glaser for Reuters**.

“A popular argument against the prospect of rapprochement with North Korea is that we tried diplomacy in the 1990s and Pyongyang took advantage of American overtures and failed to live up to its commitments,” Glaser writes.

“But that is an incredibly misleading representation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. Negotiated by the Clinton administration, the Agreed Framework froze Pyongyang’s plutonium pathway to a nuclear bomb and opened its program up to inspections in exchange for economic and diplomatic concessions from Washington. Unfortunately, according to Stanford University’s **Siegfried S. Hecker**, many in Congress opposed the deal and ‘failed to appropriate funds for key provisions of the pact, causing the United States to fall behind in its commitments almost from the beginning.’

“Pyongyang took this as a signal that it needed a back-up plan.”

Why Russia Should Worry About Iran Protests

The backdrop to the **protests in Iran** has echoes of what is unfolding in Russia. Moscow should be worried, **suggests Vladimir Frolov in the *Moscow Times***.

“In Iran, people took to the streets because of the faltering economy and its skewed structure that gives most of the spoils to the clerics and their cronies, as well as to senior leaders within the security services,” Frolov writes.

“The burden of sanctions has been disproportionately borne by the people, whose incomes plummeted or stagnated. Meanwhile, regime cronies were profiting from sanctions arbitrage while trying to deflect people’s discontent towards foreign enemies.

“This has unnerving parallels with Russia today, where the costs of Western sanctions and Russian counter-sanctions are also largely borne by the people, while those close to the Kremlin are winning government contracts and special tax regimes to compensate for their losses in the West.”

“Moreover, Moscow should be worried about Iranian instability spreading to neighboring Azerbaijan where another corrupt and autocratic regime faces presidential elections next fall. An uprising in Iran and in Azerbaijan would strain Russia’s security efforts to a degree unseen before.”

- **Misplaced finger-pointing?** Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei **blamed ongoing protests on the country's "enemies,"** while Russia has warned of "external interference." But **Margaret Coker suggests in *The New York Times*** that such explanations don't appear to stack up.

"The demonstrations, which are widespread and amorphous, do not match the playbook that Western intelligence agencies have used to mount covert operations in Iran—namely, sustained resource-intensive operations that focus on the narrowly defined and measurable goal of sabotaging the alleged nuclear weapons program, [Iran watchers and US intelligence officials] say," Coker writes.

"A former American intelligence official said it was implausible that a foreign agency could organize protests in dozens of cities without the Iranian government catching wind of it beforehand. Additionally, Western spy agencies are leery of operations that rely on mass demonstrations, which have a high risk of failure and cannot be easily controlled, the official said."

German Crime Data Is Troubling. And an Opportunity

A new study suggesting refugees were largely responsible for a jump in violent crime in one German state has sparked renewed debate about **Angela Merkel's decision to open the country's doors to more than one million refugees.** If the government wants to neutralize the far-right's appeal, it needs to learn some lessons from the data, **suggests Leonid Bershidsky for Bloomberg View.**

"There's no denying that the disorderly immigration of 2015 and 2016 has resulted in measurable damage to German society. Despite its major problem with population aging and its need for immigrants, Germany has learned the hard way that it must have more control over who comes in," Bershidsky writes.

"But it must also move on from the trauma of Merkel's shock decision to working more meaningfully with the newcomers, who are, for the most part, here to stay, whatever politicians may think of it. That means providing strong language and professional training, offering more housing options and allowing families to reunite to address the gender imbalance. Strong and transparent police action is also required to protect social norms and keep society adequately informed, even if the data seem to reinforce anti-immigrant attitudes. Integration includes using both sticks and carrots to teach newcomers about both the opportunities that come with moving to Europe and the limits it imposes."

China's Green Economy Bad for Business? Not So Far

China's "sweeping campaign to reduce pollution" was widely expected to result in steep costs for the country's economy, dragging down growth while boosting inflation, ***The Economist writes***. So far? Not so much.

"[T]he biggest economic surprise of China's environmental campaign so far is not that it has had an impact; it is how muted that impact has been. Yes, industrial production has recently been weaker than forecast, but it is still expanding at more than 6% year on year. And yes, some commodity prices have shot up, but this has had very little effect on general inflation," *The Economist* says.

Why? For a start, "despite the common assumption that industries such as steel or coal are vast, they in fact account for a small, shrinking share of the Chinese economy," *The Economist* notes.

Meanwhile, "green restrictions can themselves generate growth and jobs. China's drive for cleaner energy sources has gained momentum. Estimates suggest it installed nearly 55 gigawatts of solar-power capacity in 2017, more than the existing capacity of any other country at the start of the year. China accounts for about two-fifths of global production of electric cars. And in more established industries, companies feel pressure to upgrade."