



# Diplomatic Relations with the DPRK: India as a Global Case Study

*Justin Kim-Hummel*

**Abstract:** India's "backstage" relationship with the DPRK is an important case study from not only a historical perspective, but also as an insight into successful diplomatic relations. As one of the few countries with strong ties in both Koreas, India is a relevant example of how to "manage North Korea" as the United States normalizes diplomatic relations with Cuba and Iran. The lessons of India's past can be applied to contemporary times. The analysis of this relationship regarding solely North Korea has yet to be formalized and explored in an academic sense. With only a handful of substantive pieces written, it is important to review the diplomatic ties between these two nations from a "how to" perspective and understand the best way to utilize their future relations based on their history, including from the US perspective. With next to no formal academic research on the DPRK-India diplomatic ties outside of a few short think-tank articles, this paper will allow researchers to be more aware of this blossoming affiliation, relevant literature and ever-growing importance for the future of the DPRK. This paper facilitates discussion and interest between the two nations as the DPRK continues to define itself under Kim Jung Un's rule; additionally regarding the current US perspective in relation to Cuba and the Iran Nuclear Deal.

**Keywords:** *North Korea, DPRK, India, Obama Trifecta, Kim Jung Un, Iran Nuclear Deal.*

## Introduction

On December 10, 1973, India opened official diplomatic relations with the DPRK, having maintained consular relations since March 1, 1962.<sup>1</sup> Both countries have a fully functioning embassy in each other's capital and work towards strengthening relations through cultural exchange and understanding. The relationship was founded on the cooperation as members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Korea-India Friendship Association in 1970.<sup>2</sup> At the time, India had taken an active role in respecting the sovereignty of nations and continues to today. As their relationship grew, the DPRK's arms sale to Pakistan in the 1990's proved a point where India could have reacted emotionally. Instead, this transaction seemed to open a second doorway and renewed the bilateral Indian-North Korean relations.

---

1 "India-DPRK Relations 2013," Indian Ministry of External Affairs Report, accessed August 8, 2015, [http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea\\_DPR](http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea_DPR)

2 "India-DPRK Relations 2013-2015," Indian Ministry of External Affairs Report, accessed August 8, 2015, [http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea\\_DPR](http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea_DPR).

---

Justin Kim-Hummel is a Master's Candidate at Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

E-mail: [wkimhum1@jhu.edu](mailto:wkimhum1@jhu.edu)

Since diplomatic relations were formed, there was little research or sources available for review outside of the most recent Indian Ministry reports starting in 2003. Therefore, I will focus on the creation of the association, solely regarding North Korea, beginning with the Korean War, Non-Aligned Movement and the year 2000 onward when the countries ramped up visits and exchanges. Only in the last few years have academics started critically analyzing the Indian-DPRK alliance. India should be viewed as a partner trying to strengthen relations with North Korea to foster stability in the region. This article draws on the few pre-2000 sources available, focusing on diplomatic cables, India Ministry reports, and treaties. Post-2000, this article used reports that analyzed the relationship as well as Indian, North and South Korean newspaper articles. With little information on DPRK's policy towards India, this article will evaluate the relationship from India's perspective and to a much lesser extent, the United States. As such, I propose using India's strategy could be useful for the US as it opens relations with Iran and Cuba; some academics speculate that North Korea may be next.<sup>3</sup>

### **India and North Korea: A Historical Context**

To understand how India crafted their relationship with North Korea, the history must be examined between the two countries. While reviewing key differences regarding historical relations between the three published India-DPRK bilateral relations reports,<sup>4</sup> the 2012 report started with a story of an ancient Korean King marrying a princess of India in A.D. 45. The report then shared a poem by Indian poet and Nobel Prize winner, Rabindranath Tagore:

In the golden age of Asia,  
Korea was one of its lamp bearers, and  
That lamp is waiting to be lighted once again  
For the illumination in the East.

The fact this report included the ancient historical context shows the importance of the relationship between India and Korea. During this era, Tagore was thought of highly by all Koreans and his poem inspired the country during the Korean War. To this day, his work is referenced in Korean textbooks and published throughout the Koreas.<sup>5</sup> From this literary connection, India took on the role of a "father-in-law" of the Kim dynasty

---

3 Evan J.R. Revere, "U.S. Normalization with Cuba: Is North Korea Next?" last modified December 18, 2014. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/12/18-north-korea-cuba-revere>.

4 "India-DPRK Relations 2013-2015," Indian Ministry of External Affairs Report, accessed August 8, 2015, [http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea\\_DPR](http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea_DPR).

5 Kim Yang-Shik, "Tagore and Korea," accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.euro-tongil.org/swedish/english/Tagore%20and%20Korea%20By%20Kim%20Yang-shik.pdf>.

in modern North Korea from a Confucian historical context. With this self-proclaimed role, India has taken care of North Korea through aid and cultural exchanges that will be discussed further.<sup>6</sup> With this ancient Confucian patriarchal connection, North Korea built a solid foundation with India as evidenced moving towards the Korean War.

### *India's Role in the Korean War*<sup>7</sup>

Starting before the Korean War, India maintained its stance for the independence of the "Whole Korea." To exemplify this attitude, India did not support the war with armed forces, but offered aid on humanitarian grounds. India supported Korea as a strong mediator, sitting on the UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK). The nation of India believed Korea should be one nation and wanted to peacefully resolve the conflict if possible, as was the main view of the UNTCOK. During the war, India not only tried to stabilize the region, as a newly independent nation, but also aimed to keep China and the US appeased by not interfering militarily. India's neutral stance allowed the country to build meaningful relations with the region and become the leader of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). This led to an exchange of war prisoners between the Koreas near the end of the war.<sup>8</sup> India's leadership in the repatriation exchange between the North and South was enacted through the UN and the South viewed this as pro-communist, viewing India as a North Korea sympathizer. Even before and after the Korean War, India felt that the Koreas should resolve their issues exclusively between each other and hold elections on their terms, evidenced by publicly admonishing the Rhee government in the South. India's ideas remained congruent with their actions during the Korean War, which led to strengthened relations with both Koreas.

### *The Non-Aligned Movement*

Being an independent and sovereign nation, the premise of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) members, is a foundational belief between India's colonialism period, North Korea's "forced" division and self-proclaimed need for isolation and independence. This aforementioned history and need for self-created and self-enforced policies created deepening relations for India and North Korea, as well as other members of the NAM. North Korea joined NAM based on Kim Il Sung's views of Juché ideology and its parallels with the movement. This membership is one of the cornerstones of legitimacy for the DPRK government and created a group of nations that they can relate to across the world, including India.<sup>9</sup> In order to specifically look at the NAM in relation to the DPRK and

---

6 Ranjit Kumar Dhawan, "India's North Korean relatives," *The Korea Times*, April 21, 2015, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2015/04/162\\_177486.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2015/04/162_177486.html)

7 Kim, Chan Wahn, "The Role of India in the Korean War." *International Area Review* 13, no. 2, (2010).

8 Ibid.

9 R.R. Krishnan, "North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement," *International Studies* 20, no.

India, this paper references declassified telegrams and cables from 1977-78, shortly after DPRK joined NAM in 1976. Starting chronologically, a telegram from ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Movement in New Delhi 1977<sup>10</sup> discussed the upcoming meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of NAM and the recent trends of North Korea. The ROK Minister reported that North Korea wanted India's help in proposing a resolution regarding Korean reunification. While India supported their fellow NAM member, they felt the venue was not appropriate as the NAM felt the "Korea question" should be handled between the Koreans. Due to India's advice to withdraw their agenda for discussion, North Korea decided to trust India and leave the UN out of the matter, "in light of principles from the NAM." Shortly after the meeting, another telegram was sent from the UN to the ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs providing a summary of the meeting, specifically regarding India and North Korea's motivations.<sup>11</sup> Knowing the backstory between the two from the first telegram, it is evident that North Korea carried on the North-South political negotiation even against India's advice to wait. The UN Deputy Director deemed India "pro-Korean" due to North Korea approaching India to redraft their proposal that was rejected at the previous NAM Heads of State meeting. Even though India rejected North Korea's draft, it sympathized with the North Koreans at the meeting by not providing name tags to observers and guests of the meeting so the South Korean Ambassador's presence would not be known. The Deputy Director stated that the North Koreans had little support for their proposal to renew talks on the "Korean Matter" and were discouraged from raising the issue at the meeting, as warned by India. As realized by exchanges, the relationship between India and North Korea are deeply entwined throughout the Cold War on the foundational principles of the NAM.

## **India-DPRK Ties: Through Diplomatic Cables in the Cold War Era (1957-1990)**

*1957-1974*

Shortly after the Korean War, due to the strong ideals shared between India and the DPRK regarding the NAM, the countries reached out to each other to form legitimate diplomatic ties. Due to the lack of records and review during this time period and the increasing tension of the Cold War, this paper utilizes telegrams and diplomatic notes. It is evident that the DPRK was searching for a "big brother" in Asia during this historical era. December 10, 1957, a note between DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Seong-Cheol

---

1-2 (1981): 299-313.

<sup>10</sup> "Telegram from the Minister of Foreign," March 8, 1977, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Roll 2007-25, File 7, Frame 73-77, South Korean Foreign Ministry Archive, accessed via Wilson Center 8/2015, [Http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118383](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118383).

<sup>11</sup> "Telegram to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Deputy Director of the United Nations Division," April 10, 1977, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Roll 2007-25, File 7, Frame 73-77, South Korean Foreign Ministry Archive: Accessed via Wilson Center 8/2015: [Http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118384](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118384).

and German Democratic Republic (GDR-East Germany) Ambassador Fischer inquired about the DPRK's proposed foreign policy and trade relations in the region.<sup>12</sup> The GDR Ambassador requested answers regarding the DPRK and Bandung states, among the countries was India. On August 19, 1957, the GDR asked what North Korea's ideas were on furthering trade and what benefits they would gain by signing a bilateral trade agreement. It was found that the DPRK sent a delegation to Beijing to meet with Indian Prime Minister Nehru. While India wanted to ease into the trade agreement, waiting to formalize trade until results were seen, North Korea wanted a finalized document. DPRK Deputy Minister Pak mentioned that India was unwilling to finalize agreements due to its current trade with the United States, England, Japan and West Germany. The two countries agreed that trade would be started informally and the countries would exchange banking delegations. In the following year, March 15, 1958, the DPRK was still working diligently to establish support in the region to legitimize their nation on a global front. A note from the Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK shared of Nam Il's (North Korean General and signer of Korean Armistice Agreement) mustering for support to withdraw US troops from the ROK. He hoped to achieve this by forming "economic and cultural ties" with several countries including India.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, India strengthened relations but kept to their established views on Non-Alignment regarding the Korea question. During the Cold War era, India had relaxed relations with North Korea to keep true to their neutrality. Therefore, communications with the DPRK were rare. Not until after 1973, when diplomatic relations were formalized with the North and South, did communiqués and visits restart. A partially redacted confidential cable<sup>14</sup> discussing India House Speaker Murahari's trip to North Korea in 1974 showed India had high hopes about the DPRK and willingly retracted a press statement upon Kim Il Sung's request. It was argued that Kim nodded in agreement regarding China exerting pressure on North Korea. As the reports goes, Kim continued to confide in Murahari, evidenced by Kim's discussion of the South's plan to build tourist accommodations in North Korea. Kim continued by sharing that he thought North Korea as a member of the "third world." Murahari replied to Kim asking him to consider the South's building project; Kim then emphasized the need to have "primary relationships with the developing countries rather than be dependent

---

12 "Note about a Meeting on 29 November 1957 between Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Seong-Cheol with GDR Ambassador Comrade Fischer Comrade Behrens," December 10, 1957, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA*. Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer: Accessed via Wilson Center 7/2015 <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110011>.

13 "Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 15 March 1958," March 15, 1958, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF F.0102, Op. 14, Delo 6, Listy 61-70*. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. Accessed via Wilson Center 8/2015: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115973>.

14 "Confidential Cable from Indian Upper House Deputy Speaker Godey Murahari reflecting on trip to North Korea 1974," accessed via Wikileaks August 8, 2015: [http://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974NEWDE15888\\_b.html](http://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974NEWDE15888_b.html).

on its northern neighbors.”<sup>15</sup> As the talk continued, the leaders discussed the DPRK’s export market and commitment to expand exports to India. Knowing Murahari was strongly anti-communist, he commented that North Koreans were the “most inflexible communists he had ever encountered.”<sup>16</sup> This conversation is one of the first Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) of many that the two countries exchanged since 1974. Due to lack of documentation, this conversation between Murahari and Kim could show the first strong step forward for diplomatic relations. This is manifested in the purported candidness of Kim in order to bolster the DPRK during its struggle to legitimize its sovereignty. This sets the foundation for analyzing post-1974 relations.

*India declares the DPRK a Most Favored Nation: Treaties of 1974-1978*

On February 18, 1974, India and the DPRK signed a treaty formalizing trade between the countries, which granted the status of most favored nation to each other.<sup>17</sup> This, perhaps from the aforementioned cable with Kim Il Sung and the exchange of embassies in 1973, marked the beginning of diplomatic relations. This trade agreement followed with an official continuation of the trade agreement in 1978<sup>18</sup> lengthening the list of traded goods and affirming the desire to continue “successful economic and trade relations.” While there is no recorded trade data during this era between the two countries, the continuous renewal between India and the DPRK may imply a mutual benefit. While trade presumptively blossomed, in 1976, the two countries signed a cultural agreement<sup>19</sup> that proved a springboard for relations in the 1980s during the thaw of the Cold War. This agreement set the framework for cooperation regarding humanities and reciprocal visits of delegations in order to promote the awareness of each country. Starting in the early 1990s, the exchange of academic material, culture, and training became prevalent as each country emerged from threats of the Cold War. Understanding the history of relations before 1990 helps put the future in context between the two nations.

---

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Trade Agreement Between the Government of India and the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea 1974, INTSer 7: Accessed via Indian Treaty Series 8/2015 <http://www.commonlii.org/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1974/7.html>.

18 Trade Agreement between the Government of India and The Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 3 February 1978. Accessed 8/2015 via Indian Treaty Series: <http://www.liiofindia.org/cgi-bin/disp.pl/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1978/6.html?query=democratic%20people%27s%20republic%20of%20korea>.

19 Cultural Agreement Between the Government of India and The Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2 July 1978. Accessed 8/2015 via Indian Treaty Series: <http://www.liiofindia.org/cgi-bin/disp.pl/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1976/14.html?query=democratic%20people%27s%20republic%20of%20korea>.

## **Modern Relations: Analysis of Indian MEA Reports Regarding North Korea**

Keeping the historical context in mind, starting in the early 1990s more documentation of cultural and economic exchange between India and North Korea became available. Specifically, five similar reports<sup>20</sup> from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) published by the Indian Embassy in Pyongyang which outlined bilateral treaties, agreements, visits, investment, and current events. Each report is no more than five pages, with only the most recent (published in 2014) being accessible from India's DPRK Embassy website. The website provides a handful of press releases from the last few years discussing events held in North Korea and relevant delegation visits. Firstly, due to a Right to Information response from the MEA,<sup>21</sup> as of April 2015, the embassy employed four Indian Nationals and four DPRK Nationals in its 295 sq. meter building in Pyongyang. The request asked for more specifics regarding the roles of both sets of employees, but the MEA only partially answered three of 25 questions. Starting with the 2005 report, the first published by the MEA, it is clear across all of the reports that India takes the stance of peaceful relations between the Koreas supporting the DPRK in UN proceedings, NAM, and Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs). The 2014 report emphasizes the DPRK's support for India's campaign as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, in addition to 18 separate considerations. In return, India made note that they abstained from voting on Human Rights issues against the DPRK in all international forums. Also across all reports, the MEA highlighted the bilateral treaties and agreements enacted since 1991. Some of the highlighted achievements are the Science and Technology Agreement of 1991, continuous renewal of the 1976 Cultural Agreement, and the Sharing of Information act signed in April 2006 (which has not been finalized). Also noted are 14 visits from India and 10 visits from the DPRK, most of which had no media coverage. These visits range from 1998-2013 (as the last report was published in 2014) covering mostly ceremonial visits between officials stemming from the Cultural Agreement between the two nations.

### *India-DPRK Trade*

The next section shows what little trade data is available between the two countries. Comparing the reports, it is seen that across all five, the Indian government prefaces the data stating a trade decline due to the DPRK's "inability to carry on foreign trade due to financial crunch" even though the numbers from the Indian Ministry of Commerce show no reliable correlation:

---

20 Indian Ministry of External Affairs Report. "India-DPRK Relations 2013-2015." Accessed 8/2015. [http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea\\_DPR](http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea_DPR).

21 "Right to Information Request (India) Regarding the Indian Embassy in Pyongyang", April 4, 2015. Accessed via Right to Information Request of unknown article author. <http://imgur.com/zjUUQd2>.

Year	Indian Exports to DPRK	DPRK Exports to India
2001-02	\$170	\$19
2002-03	\$157.86	\$4.66
2003-04	\$115.35	\$1.07
2010-11	\$329.13	\$143.98
2011-12	\$.31	\$.49
2013-14	\$186.8	\$12.48

\*Data in Millions of USD, Reported by Indian Ministry of Commerce 2001-2014. <sup>22</sup> Compiled by Justin Kim-Hummel

The data above, according to the 2013 MEA report, stated “our commercial and economic relations with DPRK do not appear to be moving anywhere and there are no credible figures available for India’s trade volume with DPRK.” Even with the doubt and lack of data from DPRK’s Foreign Trade Office, India began participating in DPRK’s International Trade Fairs starting in 2010. The 2012 report mentioned North Korea wanting goods on a “deferred payment option” which India deemed unacceptable due to the DPRK’s lack of shipping infrastructure and banking system. India instead wanted to explore foreign direct investment, to which the DPRK agreed. The main hindrance to the trade relationship is the distance and lack of shipping infrastructure in the DPRK.

### *Cultural, Humanitarian, and Educational Exchange*

Between the reports, two to three of the five pages of each report highlighted the benefits of cultural, educational and humanitarian contributions. Starting in 2002, India offered an IT training program to the DPRK, increasing allotments from five to ten spots available in 2013. India also offered two slots to the DPRK for defense training. Historically, the DPRK underutilized the spots due to bureaucratic reasons. All reports also emphasized the humanitarian assistance India gave to the DPRK over the years, mostly in response to “natural calamities.” The only figure available from the reports stated India provided over US\$ 1million in food assistance through the World Food Program in 2011. Cultural activities between the two countries are more relevant, having founded the Korea-India Friendship Association in 1970 and promotion of their participation and awards at the Pyongyang Film Festival each year. The Friendship Association has regular funding from the Indian Department of Culture to sustain their Friendship Farm and School in North Korea. While the reports listed minute details of the relations, there were no media reports that mentioned these activities, outside of ceremonial visits marking diplomatic relations anniversaries and each country’s independence days.

### **After the Death of Kim Jong-Il: Deepening Ties (2011-Present)**

<sup>22</sup> “India-DPRK Relations 2013-2015,” Indian Ministry of External Affairs, accessed August 8, 2015, [http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea\\_DPR](http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea_DPR).

Leading up to the death of Kim Jong-Il, India intensified its relationship with North Korea and began offering aid to the famine stricken country. Knowing that the country experienced a poor harvest, India decided to reopen talks with the country. Kim Kye Gwan, North Korea's Ambassador to India, went to Indian officials and explained the hard times the country had fallen upon and requested aid, which was unusual as North Korea usually rejected aid as a sign of its self-sufficiency.<sup>23</sup> As a sign of trust, the two countries started to work together again. Shortly after they agreed on the aid, the DPRK briefed India's Ambassador in Pyongyang "so comprehensively that it rivalled those normally afforded in the chancelleries of free societies." India's Ambassador Pratap Singh supervised the aid distribution through the World Food Programme due to strengthened ties with North Korea's Ministry. Drawing on that momentum, normal diplomatic exchanges started to occur as outlined in the MEA reports. More recently in April 2015, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj welcomed North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong to New Delhi to discuss India's security concerns regarding North Korea.<sup>24</sup> Ri Su Yong's visit is the first to India by a DPRK Foreign Minister. The meeting symbolized commitment to "re-assessing" its relationship with North Korea. Minister Swaraj stated India would "positively" consider giving additional aid to the DPRK. The underlying tone of this meeting highlighted a nuclear Pakistan and subtle nudges were given to Minister Ri to stop supporting India's threatening neighbor. If the conversation carried any weight, North Korea may decide to lean on stable India for support during this turbulent time in Asia rather than supply arms to Pakistan. During most of their bilateral meetings, the history of Pakistani-North Korea were discussed often. Time will tell if North Korea took this meeting seriously as the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) in North Korea did not publish their accounts.<sup>25</sup> A statement issued by the Indian MEA tells of the candid and friendly talks and that emphasized "peace and stability on the Korean peninsula for India's Act East Policy" revamped by Prime Minister Modi. In current times and throughout history, India standing up for itself with North Korea was mentioned when the previous Indian Foreign Minister Khurshid met with DPRK Minister Ri on the sidelines of the 2013 East Asia Summit. Khurshid denounced the DPRK's 2013 nuclear test and explained to Ri "that it was important not to get isolated. If you do not get isolated, you will have friends to help you. But if you get isolated, it becomes difficult for even your friends to help you."<sup>26</sup> These words from India may not have fallen on deaf ears. Since meeting, the chatter between New Delhi and Pyongyang have increased as India postures itself as an international power and mediator in Asia.

---

23 K.P. Nayar, "The food bridge India built with Kim's Korea," *The Telegraph*, Dec. 20, 2011.

24 "External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj Conveys Security Concerns to North Korea," *All India, Press Trust of India*, April 13 2015.

25 Rajaram Panda, "Significance of North Korean Foreign Minister's Visit to India- Analysis," *The Eurasia Review*, April 17 2015.

26 *Ibid.*

### *The Turning Tide: 2015 and Beyond*

With India providing aid and advice to North Korea, instances of Indian meetings have sprung up in the *Rodong Sinmun* (North Korea's Worker's Party Paper) in August and September of 2015.<sup>27</sup> In celebration of North Korea's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of self-proclaimed liberation, India formed a committee to organize events regarding this occasion by the General Secretary of Congress. In return, a report was published telling of the "congratulations" that India sent to Kim Jong Un regarding the anniversary, highlighting the friendly ties and "efforts to boost bilateral cooperation."<sup>28</sup> North Korea is generally very selective in the stories they share in their national newspaper; the fact India has started to appear more frequently indicates warming relations to come, especially in light of the United States' new relations with Iran and Cuba. Following this press, Indian Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju and General Secretary Sitaram Yechury both visited the Indian Embassy in Pyongyang to mark the DPRK's Independence Day.<sup>29</sup> This self-proclaimed "quiet but extremely significant diplomatic move" shows India's seriousness in warming ties. The increased rhetoric proves that India wants to balance the region and further trade.

### **India and the Obama Trifecta**

#### *Current Press Regarding DPRK in Relation to Iran and Cuba Relations with US*

While most research done prior to 2015 on India-DPRK rehashed Indian Ministry reports and the few academic perspectives written rehashed these reports, it is imperative that as we gather more data, India-DPRK relations are viewed as moving into a new era. The analysis of the reports and history are needed to understand how the two countries have arrived at their current relationship. The context shows two nations that have taken care of each other on the premise of promoting their independent thoughts without forced foreign influence. India, a rising giant in the world, and North Korea, the last secluded state, are working together to bring the DPRK out of the dark. Washington is finally beginning to realize the importance of opening the world on each country's terms. An Indian Congressman, Hamdullah Saeed, recently visited Pyongyang and remarked, "[t] here is a rush for strategic resources in the countries like North Korea that were blockaded and sanctioned away from global economy. India should be an early bird in North Korea just in case North Korean economic ties with the world undergo change in near future."<sup>30</sup>

27 "Greetings to Kim Jong Un from Indian President," *Rodong Shinmun*, Sep 10, 2015; "Kim Yong Nam Meets Indian Ambassador to DPRK," *Rodong Shinmun*, Sep 22, 2015.

28 "DPRK's Important Days to Be Celebrated in India" *Rodong Sinmun*, Aug 4 2015.

29 Bhattacharjee Kallol, "India Reaches out, wants to upgrade ties with North Korea," *The Hindu*, Sep 16, 2015.

30 Ibid.

To mirror this comment from the US side, Evans J.R. Revere of the Center for East Asia Policy Studies and distinguished Foreign Service Officer, wrote in December of 2014 about why the DPRK is such “an outlier in contemporary international society.”<sup>31</sup> Revere mentions that many times during his career, he saw glimmers of hope for DPRK-US relations based on the agreement between the countries to open liaison offices nearly 20 years ago. It appears Pyongyang’s consistent renegeing of agreements has led them to stay locked above the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The general consensus of recent reports<sup>32</sup> explains that North Korea has the winning hand to tear down its walls on their terms if they agree to cede some control of their nuclear operations. If North Korea allowed nuclear inspections, the US may follow the path they led with Iran and Cuba and allow the DPRK’s economy to modernize. The sheer force of US business interests in Iran, Cuba and China all pushed for the US government to normalize ties, as evidenced by the Iran, nuclear deal dropping most all sanctions and giving Iran access to over US\$100billion. The question is, how can India start to reason with North Korea in order for them to take advantage of this situation? An anonymous official from the US Army Pacific command, which includes North Korea expressed that “[w]e need to share their [India’s] perspectives as it can help us [the US] to improve our own understanding and perhaps approach towards North Korea,” India’s views are critical to understanding how the US might start making way towards establishing relations with the nation.<sup>33</sup> With Vietnam and, most recently Cuba, used as a case study for lifted sanctions and economic reform, North Korea may be starting to see the bigger picture. South Korea’s President Park Geun-hye addressed similar parallels before the UN General Assembly on September 28, 2015. She proclaimed North Korea, “the last remaining non-proliferation challenge,” and feels, “the DPRK would do well to choose reform and opening rather than additional provocations and to endeavor to free its people from hardship.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Conclusions: Lesson Learned from India**

Seeing how India slowly built rapport with North Korea over the last 100 years, the United States may need to take baby steps before gaining trust in Pyongyang. Due to the US contributing to the division of the Koreas and sanctioning the DPRK many times over, North Korea is passively searching for an olive branch. India’s main lessons to apply in the US case are that it offered aid and knowledge without asking for much in

---

31 Evans J.R. Revere, “U.S. Normalization with Cuba: Is North Korea Next?,” *Brookings Institute* Dec 18, 2014.

32 John Feffer, “After Iran, Is North Korea Next?” *Institute for Policy Studies*, Sept 26 2015; “After Iran, is North Korea Next?” *The Christian Science Monitor* July 20, 2015; Shweta Desai, “Why is US pleased with India’s outreach to North Korea?” *Scroll.in* accessed through the Nautilus Institute, Apr 16 2015.

33 Shweta Desai, “Why is US pleased with India’s outreach to North Korea?” *Scroll.in* accessed through the Nautilus Institute, Apr 16 2015.

34 “Pak Geun-Hye address to UN General Assembly,” *UN News Centre*, Sept 28, 2015.

return while respecting the sovereignty of the DPRK. Although India expressed concern over Pakistan, it subtly hinted at that issue over many years of educational, cultural and trade exchange, allowing North Korea to make decisions on their own accord. Yes, the United States is pushing for denuclearization of North Korea, but in order to be effective, the Six-Party Talks must be restarted and small concessions need to be made, as in the Iran Nuclear deal.<sup>35</sup> Despite North Korea's claims that it is not interested in an "Iran deal,"<sup>36</sup> the US offered a very similar plan under the Clinton administration that was agreed to by the DPRK<sup>37</sup> and again could offer a modified plan for North Korea's review. With Obama's administration coming to a close, he may be working on completing his trifecta<sup>38</sup> but will need to lay off of the hardline "denuclearize or nothing" attitude. Due to UN sanctions, the DPRK has no mainstream official channels to build infrastructure and help their impoverished citizens. Their only bargaining chip is nuclear weapons and threat of engagement they cannot afford to act on. The US realizes India is making advances with not only North, but also South Korea. Through respecting the DPRK's sovereignty, as evidenced by India, relations can be established. Once India started to warm up to North Korea, it was able to offer candid remarks and still be considered friends. Noam Chomsky expressed the best proof of how to deal with North Korea, which stemmed from India's moral foundation and understanding that the DPRK is a nation that wants to be respected: "In 1993, Israel and North Korea were moving towards an agreement in which North Korea would stop sending any missiles or military technology to the Middle East and *Israel would recognize that country*."<sup>39</sup> US President Clinton stepped in and deemed that request unacceptable. However, India knew all along: recognize and respect the sovereignty of the DPRK and relations enter a new level. **GPR**

---

35 Katzmann and Kerr, *Iran Nuclear Agreement: Selected Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Reports, August 6, 2015, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R44142.pdf>.

36 John Feffer, "After Iran, is North Korea Next?" *The Christian Science Monitor* July 20, 2015

37 Matt Vespa, "That time Bill Clinton Said North Korea would Dismantle Its Nuclear Program," *Townhall.com*, Apr 7, 2015. <http://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2015/04/07/that-time-bill-clinton-said-north-korea-will-dismantle-its-nuke-program-n1981099>.

38 Tim Beal, "Will North Korea Make Obama's Trifecta? Don't bet on it" June 9, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/06/will-north-korea-make-obamas-trifecta-dont-bet-on-it/>.

39 Noam Chomsky, "Noam Chomsky, The Eve of Destruction," *Tomdispatch.com*, June 4, 2013, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175707/http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175707/>.

## Bibliography

- Beal, Tim. "Will North Korea Make Obama's Trifecta? Don't bet on it." *NK News*, June 9, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/06/will-north-korea-make-obamas-trifecta-dont-bet-on-it/>.
- Bhattacharjee, Kallol. "India Reaches out, wants to upgrade ties with North Korea." *The Hindu*, Sep 16, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-reaches-out-wants-to-upgrade-ties-with-north-korea/article7656332.ece>.
- Chomsky, Noam. "Noam Chomsky, The Eve of Destruction." *Tomdispatch*, June 4, 2013, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175707/http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175707/>.
- "Cultural Agreement Between the Government of India and The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *Indian Treaty Series*, July 2, 1978, <http://www.liiofindia.org/cgi-bin/disp.pl/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1976/14.html?query=democratic%20people%27s%20republic%20of%20korea>.
- "DPRK's Important Days to Be Celebrated in India," *Rodong Sinmun*, August 4, 2015, <http://www.kcna.us/2015/08/02/news-05/>.
- "External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj Conveys Security Concerns to North Korea," *All India, Press Trust of India*, April 13, 2015, <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/external-affairs-minister-sushma-swaraj-conveys-security-concerns-to-north-korea-754596>.
- Feffer, John. "After Iran, Is North Korea Next?" *Institute for Policy Studies*, September 26, 2015, <http://fpif.org/after-iran-is-north-korea-next/>.
- "Greetings to Kim Jong Un from Indian President." *Rodong Sinmun*, September 10, 2015, (No longer available via internet).
- "I filed a Right to Information application about the Indian embassy in North Korea. Got some mildly interesting details. It's a small embassy with 4 Indians and 4 North Korean employees" Accessed via Imgur.com blog, Indian Right to Information Application, April 4, 2015, <http://imgur.com/zjUUQd2>.
- "India-DPRK Relations." Indian Ministry of External Affairs: Indian Embassy DPRK. Jan. 3 2014, [http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea\\_DPR](http://mea.gov.in/indian-mission.htm?504/Korea_DPR).
- "Indian Comments on North Korea" November 27, 1974. Accessed via Wikileaks: [http://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974NEWDE15888\\_b.html](http://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974NEWDE15888_b.html).
- "Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 15 March 1958," March

15, 1958, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF F.0102, Op. 14, Delo 6, Listy 61-70. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg, Accessed via Wilson Center: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115973>.

Katzmann, Kenneth and Paul Kerr. "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Selected Issues for Congress." *Congressional Research Reports*, April 6, 2015, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R44142.pdf>.

Kim, Chan Wahn. "The Role of India in the Korean War." *International Area Review* 13, no. 2 (2010).

Kim, Yang-Shik. "Tagore and Korea." Accessed July 19, 2015. <http://www.euro-tongil.org/swedish/english/Tagore%20and%20Korea%20By%20Kim%20Yang-shik.pdf>

"Kim Yong Nam Meets Indian Ambassador to DPRK," *Rodong Sinmun*, September 22, 2015.

Krishnan, R.R. "North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement." *International Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (1981): 299-313.

Monitor's Editorial Board, "After Iran, is North Korea Next?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 20, 2015. Accessed July 22, 2015. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2015/0720/After-Iran-is-North-Korea-next>.

Nayar, K.P. "The food bridge India built with Kim's Korea," *The Telegraph*, December 20, 2011. [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1111220/jsp/frontpage/story\\_14904670.jsp#.VxBECDArKhc](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1111220/jsp/frontpage/story_14904670.jsp#.VxBECDArKhc).

"Note about a Meeting on 29 November 1957 between Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Seong-Cheol with GDR Ambassador Comrade Fischer Comrade Behrens." December 10, 1957, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA. Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer: Accessed via Wilson Center: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110011>.

Pak Geun-Hye address to UN General Assembly on Sept. 28, 2015, accessed via UN News Centre. <http://gadebate.un.org/70/republic-korea>.

Panda, Rajaram. "Significance of North Korean Foreign Minister's Visit to India-Analysis." *The Eurasia Review*, April 17, 2015. <http://www.eurasiareview.com/17042015-significance-of-north-korean-foreign-ministers-visit-to-india-analysis/>.

Ranjit, Kumar Dhawan. "India's North Korean relatives." *Korea Times*, April 21, 2015. [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2015/04/162\\_177486.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2015/04/162_177486.html)

Revere, Evans J.R. "U.S. Normalization with Cuba: Is North Korea Next?" *The Brookings Institute*. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/12/18-north-korea-cuba-revere>

Shweta, Desai. "Why is US pleased with India's outreach to North Korea?" *Scroll.in* accessed through the Nautilus Institute, Apr 16, 2015. <http://scroll.in/article/720530/why-is-us-pleased-with-indias-outreach-to-north-korea>

"Telegram from the Minister of Foreign." March 8, 1977. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Roll 2007-25, File 7, Frame 73-77, South Korean Foreign Ministry Archive, accessed via Wilson Center. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118383>.

"Telegram to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Deputy Director of the United Nations Division." April 10, 1977. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Roll 2007-25, File 7, Frame 73-77, South Korean Foreign Ministry Archive: Accessed via Wilson Center. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118384>.

"Trade Agreement Between the Government of India and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [1974] INTSer 7" Indian Treaty Series February 18, 1974. <http://www.commonlii.org/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1974/7.html>.

"Trade Agreement Between the Government of India and The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *Indian Treaty Series*, February 3, 1978. <http://www.liiofindia.org/cgi-bin/disp.pl/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1978/6.html?query=democratic%20people%27s%20republic%20of%20korea>.

Vespa, Matt, "That Time Bill Clinton Said North Korea Would Dismantle Its Nuclear Program," *Townhall.com*, Apr 7, 2015. <http://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2015/04/07/that-time-bill-clinton-said-north-korea-will-dismantle-its-nuke-program-n1981099>.