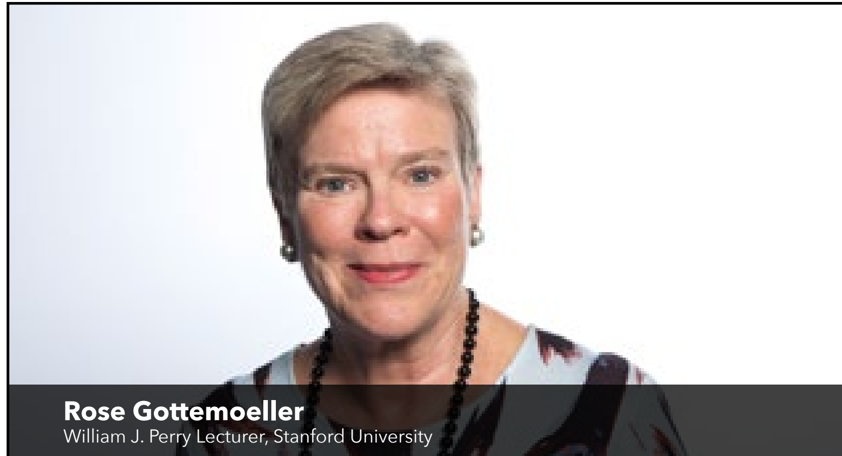
Discussion Guide for
"International Security and North Korea's Nuclear Program"

a video from the Honorable Rose Gottemoeller,
Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University



Organizing Questions

- What is national security?
- What is international security?
- What is the biggest risk that threatens the security of all countries?
- What are some solutions to North Korea's nuclear weapons threat?

Summary

In this video, the Honorable Rose Gottemoeller discusses the difference between national and international security. She takes a close look at the nuclear weapons program of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)—or North Korea—and highlights the possible danger that its nuclear weapons could pose to the world, as well as different ways to mitigate this risk. Corie Wieland, a former graduate student at Stanford, also shares a possible solution to North Korea's nuclear weapons threat.

Objectives

During and after viewing this video, students will:

- gain a general understanding of national and international security;
- consider the dangers of nuclear weapons; and
- examine the importance and role of diplomacy, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations, and the military in addressing nuclear threats.

Materials

Handout 1, *Video Notes*, pp. 4–6, 30 copies
Handout 2, *Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)*, p. 9, 30 copies
Handout 3, *Reducing Nuclear Threats*, p. 10, 30 copies
Handout 4, *Supplemental Readings*, p. 11, 30 copies (optional)
Answer Key, *Video Notes*, pp. 7–8
Teacher Information, *Video Transcript*, pp. 12–15
Video, "International Security and North Korea's Nuclear Program," online at https://youtu.be/qbFmxFbwRCU

Equipment

- Computer with Internet access and an HTML5-supported Web browser
- Computer projector and screen
- Computer speakers

Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a class size of 30 students. Adjust accordingly for different class sizes.

1. Preview Video, "International Security and North Korea's Nuclear Program."
2. Become familiar with the content of handouts and answer key.
3. Make the appropriate number of copies of handouts.
4. Set up and test computer, projector, speakers, and video before beginning the lesson.

Time

Two 50-minute class periods

Procedures Day One

1. Explain to students that they will be viewing a short video that introduces national and international security and the threat of nuclear weapons, specifically with regard to North Korea. Explain that the official name of North Korea is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and that these names are used interchangeably in this lesson. The Honorable Rose Gottemoeller, former Deputy Secretary General of NATO and William J. Perry Lecturer at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, is the main speaker.
2. Distribute one copy of Handout 1, *Video Notes*, and Handout 2, *Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)*, to each student. Allow students several minutes to read through the questions and defined terms on Handout 1 and Handout 2.
3. View the Video, "International Security and North Korea's Nuclear Program." If necessary, pause the video at various points to allow students to respond to the questions on Handout 1.

4. Once the video has ended, give students several minutes to complete their respondes to the questions.
5. Organize students into six groups. Distribute one copy of Handout 3, *Reducing Nuclear Threats*, to each student. Assign each group one of the three countries to analyze. You may assign countries randomly or allow each group to choose its preference. You may also want to distribute one copy of Handout 4, *Supplemental Readings*, to each group.
6. For homework, have students conduct their own independent group research. Inform them that they will be presenting their solutions to the class on Day Two.

Day Two

1. Make computers available for student use and allow time for students to continue their research and address the prompts on Handout 3 in their groups. Students may refer to all handouts, use the supplemental readings, conduct research on the Internet, and refer to points made in the video to prepare their presentations.
2. Have each group present its findings to the class.
3. Discuss the outcome of each group's proposed ideas as a full class.
4. Debrief the lesson as a class using the following discussion questions:
   - What is national security and what is international security?
   - How concerned are you about the threat of nuclear war?
   - Do nuclear weapons make the world more or less safe?
   - North Korea isn't the only country with nuclear weapons. What can be done to solve the global threat of nuclear weapons being used again?

Video Notes

You are about to watch a 16-minute video of remarks from the Honorable Rose Gottemoeller, former Deputy Secretary General of NATO and William J. Perry Lecturer at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. In this video, Ms. Gottemoeller discusses the difference between national and international security and takes a close look at North Korea's nuclear program. Corie Wieland, a former graduate student at Stanford University, shares a possible solution to North Korea's nuclear weapons threat.

Answer the questions below based on the video. You may want to take notes on another sheet of paper first as you watch the video.

1. What example does Gottemoeller use to explain how a threat can be both a national security problem and an international security problem at the same time?

2. What does Gottemoeller mean when she describes the use of two atomic bombs in World War II as a "terrible victory"?

3. What are the potential problems with allowing New START to expire in February 2026? Why might this matter for North Korea specifically?

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4. What does Corie Wieland mean by the "continuous cycle of failed negotiations?" What does she believe is the root cause of this continuing failure?

5. What joint project does Wieland propose for helping South Korea and North Korea work together? Why does she believe this proposal could work?

6. What has changed in U.S.–North Korea relations since Donald Trump and King Jong Un held their series of summits in 2018 and 2019?

Reference: Defined Terms (in order of mention)

New START—a nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia, signed in 2010, that set limits on the number of deployed nuclear warheads and delivery systems each country could maintain. The treaty expired in February 2026.

hallyu—a Korean word meaning "Korean Wave" that refers to the global popularity of South Korean popular culture—particularly K-Pop, K-dramas, and Korean films—since the 1990s

NGO—abbreviation of non-governmental organization; organizations which are independent of government involvement and are a subgroup of organizations founded by citizens, which include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others. NGOs are usually nonprofit organizations, and many of them are active in humanitarianism or the social sciences.

nuclear proliferation—the spread of nuclear weapons, fissionable material, and weapons-applicable nuclear technology and information to nations not recognized as "Nuclear Weapon States" by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT

blockchain—a digital record-keeping system in which data is stored in a chain of connected blocks that cannot be changed once recorded. Because no single person controls the record and past entries cannot be secretly altered, blockchain is considered a secure and transparent way to store information.

cryptocurrency—a form of digital money that uses blockchain technology and operates independently of any government or central bank. Bitcoin is the most well-known example.

Video Notes

1. What example does Gottemoeller use to explain how a threat can be both a national security problem and an international security problem at the same time?
   - *She uses North Korea's nuclear weapons as her example; Gottemoeller explicitly states that a North Korean strike "would inflict serious damage both to the United States and to international security."*
   - *North Korea's nuclear weapons constitute a national security threat for the United States because North Korea's missiles could reach United States cities, including San Francisco. A single nuclear missile strike could kill over 89,000 people.*
   - *North Korea's nuclear weapons are also an international security threat because nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945, so any use would shatter a global norm and destabilize relations among all nations.*

2. What does Gottemoeller mean when she describes the use of two atomic bombs in World War II as a "terrible victory"?
   - *For the United States, it was a victory to develop nuclear weapons before Germany or the Soviet Union, and the bombs ended WWII without requiring a ground invasion of Japan that would have cost many American lives.*
   - *However, the bombs were also terrible because of the horrific destruction and suffering they caused. Gottemoeller reads an account of a Nagasaki survivor who says the post-bomb landscape of fire, smoke, and death "seemed like the end of the world."*
   - *Paradoxically, winning the race to build the bomb did not make the United States permanently safe. Instead, it launched a cycle of proliferation that eventually gave nuclear weapons to adversaries, including North Korea.*

3. What are the potential problems with allowing New START to expire in February 2026? Why might this matter for North Korea specifically?
   - *With New START expired, no active treaty limits the two largest nuclear arsenals in the world (United States and Russia). This could trigger a renewed arms race, with neither side legally bound to cap its deployed warheads.*
   - *This also means the United States has less credibility in pressuring a smaller nation like North Korea to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons, since the major powers are not limiting their own. North Korea can argue that demands for denuclearization are hypocritical when the countries making those demands are themselves unrestrained.*

4. What does Corie Wieland mean by the "continuous cycle of failed negotiations?" What does she believe is the root cause of this continuing failure?
   - *Wieland describes a cycle in which something dramatic happens, negotiations start, aid or relief is offered, but then the dramatic thing happens again and everyone is back to square one, except that North Korea gets to keep what it gained in each cycle and is likely already working on the next provocation. As this cycle has repeated, the "dramatic thing" now includes North Korea's nuclear weapons and the possibility of a nuclear strike.*

- *Wieland believes the root cause is an extreme lack of trust. Without trust, no country will make concessions. Accordingly, she argues that negotiations keep failing because they start at "square one" (demands and concessions) instead of "square zero" (building basic trust first).*

5. What joint project does Wieland propose for helping South Korea and North Korea work together? Why does she believe this proposal could work?
   - *She proposes a joint civilian satellite project in which South Korea provides the satellite hardware and North Korea provides blockchain technology to manage the data. Since blockchain cannot be altered, both countries could verify that neither is using the satellite for secret military purposes.*
   - *Wieland argues this could work because it gives each country a genuine technical role, making it a real partnership rather than one side receiving aid. It also builds on each country's existing strengths: South Korea already has a growing space program, and North Korea has demonstrated advanced cyber and blockchain skills.*
   - *The goal is not to solve the nuclear problem directly but to create a track record of non-military cooperation that builds enough trust to carry future nuclear negotiations further.*

6. What has changed in U.S.–North Korea relations since Donald Trump and King Jong Un held their series of summits in 2018 and 2019?

   The period since the summits has been defined by a failure to follow through on denuclearization, an expansion of North Korea's weapons programs, a new North Korean alliance with Russia, and the possibility—but not yet the reality—of a renewed round of diplomacy during Trump's second term.

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Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by states with nuclear weapons. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely. A total of 191 states have joined the Treaty, including the five nuclear-weapon states (United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia). More countries have ratified the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty's significance.

The Treaty is regarded as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. It was designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to further the goals of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

To further the goal of non-proliferation and as a confidence-building measure between parties, the Treaty establishes a safeguards system under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Safeguards are used to verify compliance with the Treaty through inspections conducted by the IAEA. The Treaty promotes cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear technology and equal access to this technology for all parties, while safeguards prevent the diversion of fissile material for weapons use.

The provisions of the Treaty, particularly article VIII, paragraph 3, envisage a review of the operation of the Treaty every five years, a provision which was reaffirmed by the parties at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ended without the adoption of a consensus substantive outcome. After a successful 2010 Review Conference at which parties agreed to a final document which included conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions, including the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, the 2015 outcome constitutes a setback for the strengthened review process instituted to ensure accountability with respect to activities under the three pillars of the Treaty as part of the package in support of the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995. The Review Conference that was planned for 2020 was rescheduled to 2022 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Disputes related to Russia's war with Ukraine and its occupation of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant prevented consensus at the conference, and—as in 2015—it ended without a consensus outcome document.

North Korea's nuclear weapons program was in violation of the NPT and so it withdrew from the Treaty in 2003. IAEA inspections were one of the tools the international community employed to gain clarity about North Korea's nuclear program and convince the country to resume its compliance, until North Korea ceased cooperation with the IAEA in 2009.

Sources:

United Nations (https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/);
IAEA (https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/dprk/fact-sheet-on-dprk-nuclear-safeguards)

Reducing Nuclear Threats

While several countries have conducted nuclear testing, nuclear weapons have been used in armed conflict only twice to date. The first instance was toward the end of World War II when the United States released a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, Japan on 6 August 1945. A second nuclear bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan only three days later on 9 August 1945. Over 350,000 people lost their lives as a result of the bombs. Since then, it has been the work of many governments, NGOs, the United Nations, and students studying international security policy and diplomacy to prevent future catastrophic loss of life due to nuclear conflict.

Your group will research three different kinds of states having nuclear weapons: North Korea, a "pariah state" that withdrew from the NPT and therefore acquired its nuclear weapons illegally; Russia, a nuclear weapon state under the NPT (with that legal status); and India, a state that possesses nuclear weapons but never joined the NPT (and therefore has no status under the NPT, legal or otherwise).

1. North Korea
2. Russia
3. India

In your assigned group, review the solution that Corie Wieland and her classmate came up with to mitigate the risk of nuclear conflict with North Korea. With the use of supplemental reading and your own independent research, come up with your own solution to prevent nuclear conflict with the country you are researching. Be prepared to present your proposed solution to the class. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise.

Here are some points to include in your presentation:

1. Overview of your assigned country and its points of tension
2. The size of your assigned country's nuclear weapons stockpile
3. Current status of nuclear talks that include your assigned country
4. Ideas on how to mitigate the risk of nuclear conflict with your assigned country

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Supplemental Readings

Overview

- Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance: https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat

North Korea

- NPR news report on Trump's visit to the DMZ: https://www.npr.org/2019/06/30/737365074/trump-to-meet-kim-jong-un-at-dmz
- *Newsweek* analysis of the Singapore Summit's document compared to past agreements: https://www.newsweek.com/did-trump-and-kim-make-history-how-summit-document-compares-past-agreements-971551 (this one's on the heavier side)
- *Foreign Policy* article about the challenges facing President Biden and a succinct overview of past diplomacy efforts: https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/28/biden-north-korea-kim-jong-un-nuclear-talks-diplomacy-fail-succeed/
- *Billboard* article on Red Velvet meeting with Kim Jong Un: https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/8280163/red-velvet-perform-north-korean-leader-kim-jong-un-pyongyang
- *Foreign Policy* article on North Korea's cyber threat: https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/15/north-korea-missiles-cyberattack-hacker-armies-crime/
- *United Press International* article on North Korea satellites: https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2021/04/22/nkorea-North-Korea-Kwangmyongsong4-no-data/7071619096630/

Russia

- U.S.–Russia nuclear conflict: https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/15/biden-putin-nuclear-talks-494479
- Key issues for the United States and Russia: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/04/08/nuclear-arms-control-in-the-2020s/

India

- Factsheet on India's nuclear program: https://armscontrolcenter.org/indias-nuclear-capabilities/
- Article on India's decision to stay out of the NPT: https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/india-and-the-npt-after-50-years/
- History of India's nuclear program: https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/indian-nuclear-program

Video Transcript

"International Security and North Korea's Nuclear Program"
Rose Gottemoeller
William J. Perry Lecturer, Stanford University

Recorded 9 February 2026

Rose Gottemoeller: Hello everyone! My name is Rose Gottemoeller, and I am the William J. Perry Lecturer at Stanford University and a former Deputy Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, which is our alliance with European countries to help defend ourselves against Russia and other threats, particularly terrorism. I also led the U.S. delegation in negotiating a treaty that limited American and Russian nuclear weapons. The treaty was called "New START," and it went out of force in February 2026. What I want to tell you about today is the terrible danger that nuclear weapons pose to the national security of the United States, as well as to international security.

But first, let's talk briefly about the difference between national and international security. When we talk about national security, we mean that any country wants to protect itself and its people from external threats. International security, on the other hand, concerns the entire world, the entire globe—it is the absence of war and conflict between the world's nations. Now, while the terms are different, some of the risks facing any nation and the global community are the same. The biggest one that threatens the security of all nations, including superpowers like the United States, is the existence of nuclear weapons.

These weapons were born during World War II in an arms race between the United States, Germany, and the Soviet Union. The United States won, and it's good we got there first, but in some ways, it was a terrible victory: we acquired the doomsday weapon. At the end of World War II, facing the horrific loss of American lives that would have come about if the U.S. invaded Japan, the U.S. President, President Truman, decided to launch two nuclear weapons against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two Japanese cities. The destruction was horrifying.

This is a photo of Hiroshima, but the destruction was just as bad in Nagasaki. As a Nagasaki survivor put it, "The sky was dark as pitch, covered with dense clouds of smoke; under that blackness, over the earth, hung a yellow-brown fog. Gradually, the veiled ground became visible and the view beyond rooted me to the spot with horror. All the buildings I could see were on fire... Trees on the nearby hills were smoking, as were the leaves of sweet potatoes in the fields. To say that everything burned is not enough. The sky was dark, the ground was scarlet, and in between hung clouds of yellow smoke. Three kinds of color— black, yellow, and scarlet— loomed ominously over the people, who ran about like so many ants seeking to escape... That ocean of fire, that sky of smoke! It seemed like the end of the world."

Now I am going to change gears a bit. Before we get talking about nuclear weapons some more and dive deeper into this topic, I'd like to talk a little bit about the Korean peninsula. South Korea and North Korea used to be one country on the Korean Peninsula, but they split apart 70-plus years ago, after a devastating war. Since then, South Korea has become a vibrant and thriving democracy that is known across the world for its K-Pop music, for its anime, for its food, for its culture.

What you just saw is more than a popular animated film—it's a snapshot of how deeply Korean pop culture has embedded itself around the world. Since its release, Netflix's KPop Demon Hunters has surged into global prominence, breaking viewership records and sending its songs up international charts. This success is fueled by *hallyu*, the worldwide wave of South Korean culture driven by K-Pop's massive fanbase. No doubt many of you are fans of *hallyu*! Even I enjoy KPop Demon Hunters!

But North Korea is different. North Korea is a gloomy dictatorship that tightly controls the lives of its citizens. It is otherwise known as the Hermit Kingdom, because it keeps itself mostly closed off from the outside world. It is ruled by a man named Kim Jong Un. Young people in North Korea take their lives in their hands listening in to South Korean broadcasts and accessing K-Pop films and music. They can be arrested and killed just for enjoying K-Pop. Yet, the influence of South Korean culture still finds ways into the country—sometimes in bold and surprising ways.

Here is Kim Jong Un, looking at the nuclear weapon that the North Koreans have been developing over the last few decades. This "disco ball" may look like a curiosity but like the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it can cause a massive explosion that would destroy a big city.

Another thing that the North Koreans have been developing on Kim Jong Un's orders is a huge missile that can deliver that nuclear weapon you saw right to our backyard—the San Francisco Bay Area.

As you can see, if that ball that you saw was launched at San Francisco, the city would be leveled and the losses from the explosion and the resulting radiation would be truly devastating. This table shows that over 89,000 lives would be lost. Sadly, Kim Jong Un has been threatening to do just that for several years now. If that were to happen, it would inflict serious damage both to the United States and to international security, because nuclear weapons have not been used since they were used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Second World War. Therefore, it's in the world's interest to control the risks from North Korea's nuclear weapons.

So what can we do about this threat? North Korea is a very isolated and mysterious country, and it is a challenge to understand how far they've come in their nuclear weapons development. It is even harder to engage them in a productive dialogue about those weapons.

Thankfully, there are many experts in non-governmental organizations—NGOs—and in academic institutions, such as Stanford, who are tackling these problems and coming up with ways to reduce the threat of North Korea's nukes. It's my pleasure to invite my former Stanford student Corie Wieland to share some ideas on how to get the North Koreans to put down their nuclear weapons.

Corie Wieland: North Korea, South Korea, and the United States have been at war since 1950. Although North and South Korea share both a physical connection, through their positions on the Korean Peninsula, and a cultural connection, through millennia of shared heritage, language, and history, the two Koreas have made very little progress toward peace since the declared ceasefire of 1953.

My name is Corie Wieland, and I am a graduate student at Stanford University. I started studying Korean history and language as an undergraduate, and my studies now focus on international security policy.

What stands out about the North Korea problem to me is the continuous cycle of failed

negotiations. Something dramatic happens; negotiations start; aid or relief is offered; but then the dramatic thing happens again; and everyone is back to square one except for North Korea, which gets to keep its dramatic thing and is likely already working on the next one. Unfortunately, the dramatic thing now includes nuclear weapons and the possibility of a nuclear strike.

When my classmate Rebecca Spencer and I looked at a possible framework for North Korean nuclear negotiations, we realized that square one, where representatives from two or three countries can sit down at a table, share demands, and make concessions toward a joint outcome, is a big ask for countries without trust, and an especially big ask for countries that have been at war with each other for over 70 years.

So the root of the North Korean problem, as we see it, and one reason that negotiations continue to fail, is the extreme lack of trust. No country would reasonably promise a concession without it, and no country would expect another country to comply without it. So rather than start at square one, we looked for ways to start at square zero and focus first on trust-building.

Despite recent history, North and South Korea do have a lot in common. Beyond the shared heritage, their regional proximity alone creates joint concerns about the environment, infrastructure, trade, and travel. One area that we thought could be hopeful for joint investment and cooperation is space.

To date, North Korea has placed two satellites into orbit and maintains that satellite technology is the sovereign right of any nation. South Korea is also hoping to grow its current satellite and space programs. Satellite technology can be considered dual-purpose, meaning that it can be used for military purposes, like intelligence gathering or surveillance, and civilian purposes, like predicting weather patterns or forecasting severe storms, tracking ocean pollution, or helping to manage forestation levels or even endangered species migration.

We thought that if North and South Korea could share this type of civilian satellite-based information, or even cooperate on this kind of technology, it could provide a benefit to both countries and create a pattern of non-military cooperation that could hopefully build trust between the two governments. If successful, the project could continue to build trust over time.

But to make a joint-satellite project attractive to both North and South Korean leadership, we looked at ways each country could contribute to the project. For example, if the U.S. or South Korea alone provide all of the technology and infrastructure for the satellite and its maintenance, then it isn't really a "joint" effort, and it would be difficult to convince North Korea that there isn't a hidden agenda.

We also considered that one area where North Korea repeatedly excels in is its cyber capabilities. In the West, we unfortunately read about this in terms of targeted hacking, cyber-based espionage, or massive theft of blockchain-based cryptocurrencies. While all of these efforts are illegal and causes for concern, they do demonstrate an ability by North Korean cyber specialists to master international cyber and blockchain technologies.

Therefore, we thought that one way both countries could contribute is for South Korea to provide the satellite and North Korea to provide blockchain technology that manages the data it collects. And because blockchain is immutable, meaning it can't be altered, both countries could verify that neither is using the satellite for secret purposes and it could hopefully build that trust over time.

While this project would have a lot of details left to be worked out, we think that the cost of

failure in nuclear negotiations is too high to not look for anything that could build good faith or trust between North Korea, South Korea, and the United States. Our hope for a project like this is that long-term trust building from non-military cooperation might be able to carry future nuclear negotiations a step further and decrease the chances of failure overall.

Working on this project allowed us to think beyond the threat of nuclear proliferation as a way to actually approach future negotiations, or as a way to get us from step zero to step one, and maybe even to successful nuclear diplomacy with North Korea.

Rose Gottemoeller: Wow, how interesting! Thank you so much, Corie! That was an excellent example of the creative proposals that non-governmental experts come up with to learn more about North Korea and to convince Kim Jong Un to stop threatening the world with nuclear weapons.

Of course, those ideas need to be put into practice, and that's where official diplomats— people like me—come in. Diplomacy between officials of different nations is an essential tool that helps us have dialogue even with difficult countries like North Korea, to try to convince them to stop behaving dangerously. Most of this work happens behind the scenes, but sometimes diplomacy makes big headlines.

You may have seen on the news a few years ago that President Donald Trump held a series of unprecedented personal summits with Kim Jong Un in an attempt to ease tensions and open dialogue with North Korea. During his second presidency, Trump has again signaled a willingness to revive that direct diplomacy, with the White House saying he remains open to speaking with Kim without preconditions. This comes despite the collapse of denuclearization talks after their three meetings during Trump's first term, the last in 2019, amid disputes over U.S. sanctions. Since then, Kim has accelerated his missile and nuclear programs while deepening ties with Russia, even providing support during the war in Ukraine—developments that, ironically, could give Trump new leverage and create space for renewed talks, a possible summit, and offers such as easing sanctions or formal diplomatic relations in pursuit of a nuclear agreement.

Of course, the United States does have a third way of dealing with North Korea's nuclear threat—our own military. This is the last resort that I hope never, ever comes to pass, but the United States stands ready to use its forces if all other measures fail and North Korea becomes an active and immediate threat to U.S. national security and that of our allies in the future.

So there you have it—the possible danger that North Korea's nuclear weapons could pose to us and to the world, as well as different ways to deal with this risk. It is a very important challenge to solve, but the good news is that you don't have to be a high-level government official to work on this problem. Corie Wieland demonstrated that this is a topic you can dive into and study even in high school, certainly in college! In fact, we seasoned diplomats welcome fresh perspectives from the new generation of young experts. I, for one, would very much welcome your help.

There are many organizations in the United States and across the world that are coming up with solutions to the problem of North Korea's nuclear weapons and other international security challenges. It is a very dynamic and important career field, and the U.S. government always needs people who are passionate and well-versed in these topics. Today, I hope I've sparked your interest in the matters of international security. And who knows? Maybe down the line you will be the one to figure out how to get Kim Jong Un to give up his "disco ball"! Thank you.