

AP



The Associated Press. – 21.05.2021

By Aamer Madhani

South Korea's Moon to nudge Biden on North Korea diplomacy

Президент Південної Кореї Мун Ч. І. підштовхує Д. Байдена до дипломатії з Північною Кореєю

Президент Південної Кореї Мун Чже Ін сподівається, що зустріч з президентом США Джо Байденом призведе до відновлення дипломатичної діяльності США щодо стримування ядерної програми Північної Кореї. Напередодні лише другої особистої зустрічі іноземного лідера з Д. Байденом через пандемію коронавірусу - представники Білого дому заявили, що Північна Корея буде центральним питанням переговорів. Координація розподілу вакцин, зміна клімату та проблеми регіональної безпеки, викликані Китаєм, також займають важливе місце у списку президента. Білий дім оголосив, що завершив огляд політики Північної Кореї і що Д. Байден відступить від стратегій двох своїх попередників, відкинувши як глибоко особисті зусилля Дональда Трампа перемогти лідера Північної Кореї Кім Чен Ина, так і політику Барака Обами на більш практичний підхід.

<https://apnews.com/article/politics-donald-trump-south-korea-north-korea-diplomacy-2849e4c929e62b1ef9a5e54076475a5a>



South Korean President Moon Jae-in speaks during a press conference with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., on Capitol Hill on Thursday, May 20, 2021, in Washington. (JabinBotsford/The Washington Post via AP, Pool)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in is hoping Friday's White House meeting with President Joe Biden will lead to renewed diplomatic urgency by the U.S. on curbing North Korea's nuclear program. The White House, however, is signaling that it is taking a longer view on one of the most difficult foreign policy challenges Biden faces.

Ahead of Friday's meeting — just the second in-person foreign leader session for Biden because of the coronavirus pandemic — White House officials said North Korea will be a central focus of talks. Coordination on vaccine distribution, climate change and regional security concerns spurred by China are also high on the president's list.

The White House [announced last month that it had completed a review of North Korea policy](#) and that Biden would veer from the strategies of his two most recent predecessors, rejecting both Donald Trump's deeply personal effort to win over North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Barack Obama's more hands-off approach.

But the administration has yet to detail what its third-way effort to try to prod the North to abandon its nuclear program will look like.

Moon, who will leave office next May, is eager to resume stalled talks between Washington and Pyongyang and between Seoul and Pyongyang. But the Biden administration — which confirmed in March that it had made outreach efforts to the North without success — has been less enthusiastic about the idea of direct negotiations in the near term.

Asked at Thursday's White House briefing whether Biden was open to holding direct talks with Kim, as Trump did twice, press secretary Jen Psaki demurred.

"I don't expect that to be top on his agenda," she said of Biden.

Still, Moon has made clear he plans to nudge Biden to renew diplomatic efforts with the North.

"I will not be pressed by time or become impatient during the remainder of my term. However, if there is an opportunity to restart the clock of peace and advance the peace process on the Korean Peninsula, I will do everything I can," Moon [told reporters earlier this month](#). "I look forward to North Korea responding positively."

A senior administration official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and briefed reporters on Moon's visit on the condition of anonymity, sidestepped questions about whether the administration was willing to offer North Korea sanctions relief to begin dismantling its nuclear and ballistic weapons programs.

The official said the U.S. was hoping to chart a "flexible" way forward, well aware of where past efforts went awry.

In addition to talks about North Korea, Biden is expected to use the meeting to press South Korea to adopt a more ambitious 2030 target for curbing carbon emissions and to urge Seoul to play a greater role in countering China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

Moon, meanwhile, is expected to seek Biden's assistance with helping South Korea boost its coronavirus vaccine supply. South Korea has vaccinated only about 5% of its population.

Biden is expected to lobby Moon to take a strong stance on China's activity toward Taiwan and other provocative moves Beijing has made in the region. Biden has sought to rally Pacific allies to coordinate on China, which Biden sees as the United States' fiercest economic competitor.

Biden, in the early going of his presidency, has spoken out about concerns with Beijing's trade policies and human rights record and has also highlighted regional allies' concerns about an increasingly assertive Chinese military.

Biden has taken note of Japan's concerns that China's growing military activity and broad territorial claims present a security threat. Japan is locked in a dispute with China over Beijing's claim to the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, called Diaoyu in China, in the East China Sea.

He's also looked to [strengthen relations with India](#), which has been tested by a military standoff with China along their disputed border in eastern Ladakh.

But South Korea could be more reluctant to speak out about China, an important trading partner that it also sees as playing a key role in dealing with the Kim regime.

Michael Green, who served as senior director for Asia on the National Security Council during the George W. Bush administration, said South Korea's situation is difficult.

"This South Korean policy of strategic ambiguity is proving increasingly awkward and almost untenable for Seoul because other middle powers that are not the U.S. or Japan ... are adjusting their China policies," said Green, who is senior vice president for Asia and Japan Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Biden has also invited Moon to attend a [White House Medal of Honor ceremony to honor retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr.](#) for heroic actions during the Korean War. Puckett, 94, will be cited for holding on to a strategic position near Unsan over two days in November 1950 while fighting off numerous attacks in which he suffered multiple wounds.

Moon on Thursday visited Arlington National Cemetery just outside Washington and laid a wreath at a memorial to Americans killed during the Korean War. He also made a visit to the U.S. Capitol to meet with the Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.