



WASHINGTON NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Working for the world we seek for 75 years.

Congress Must Stand Up for Diplomacy

FEBRUARY 2018
NO. 783

“If you want to make peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”

The Trump administration would do well to remember this truism from former Israeli defense minister Moshe Dayan. President Trump publicly scoffs at diplomatic efforts as he extracts the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accord and threatens North Korea. The U.S.’s credibility to negotiate—not to mention its safety—erodes with every step the president takes to break the Iran nuclear deal.

Peace within and among nations depends in part on replacing ignorance and unjustified fears with mutual understanding and trust.

FCNL Policy Statement

The country’s budget is following this lead. While the Pentagon budget continues to climb, hitting \$600 billion this year, investment in diplomacy is dwindling. Budget cuts and reorganization at the State Department mean that entire offices of that agency could close in the next year.

The Trump administration’s systematic dismantling of our international relations infrastructure could be devastating. Not only would communications channels close and programs end, but the experience and expertise of U.S. diplomats would be lost—perhaps for generations, as fewer people look to enter a career path with dim prospects.

Talks, negotiations, and all the other forms of interpersonal interactions that make up diplomacy are critical tools for U.S. foreign policy. Whether with the Soviet Union during the Cold War or with Iran in this decade, diplomacy has helped the U.S. avoid both war and capitulation. Yet too often diplomacy—if it is tried at all—is viewed as a box to be checked rather than a sustained, ongoing process that lasts up to and beyond a signed agreement. Its success is measured by the foundation it creates for ongoing relationship and dialogue.

At a time when that foundation is crumbling, how can we re-orient the U.S. toward diplomacy?

Congress is part of the answer. Your members of Congress vote on how much money to give the State Department, USAID, and other agencies that support diplomacy. Congress can limit the president’s ability to forge ahead toward war on his own. Congress can refuse to pass legislation that undermines diplomatic deals already in place. It’s critical that your members of Congress hear your strong support for diplomacy and negotiations to address conflicts.

(continued on p. 7)

OUR NEW LOOK!

For 75 years, FCNL has lobbied for peace and justice. Throughout 2018, we will be highlighting moments from that history and its relevance today.

We hope you will celebrate with us this year. To learn more, please visit fcl.org/75years.

What Is Diplomacy?

Anthony Wier heads FCNL's lobbying on Pentagon spending and nuclear disarmament. He came to FCNL from the State Department, where he had many opportunities to be part of diplomatic efforts. Communications Director Alicia McBride sat down with him to go over some diplomacy basics.

What are we talking about when we say “diplomacy”?

It means seeking to influence the world around us to secure national objectives through nonviolent means. A number of tactics and activities are included in the term, but they all have this common purpose.

What is an example of diplomatic tactics?

One example is negotiations—between representatives of individual countries or groups of countries. Sometimes the word “talks” is used, but in fact negotiations are a lot more about listening than they are talking. You’re trying to gain insight into what is motivating the other parties so you can present solutions that are mutually beneficial.

When I worked at the State Department, one of my colleagues had a sign on his desk that said “Diplomacy: the art of letting you have it my way.” That’s a tongue-in-cheek definition, but it has truth in it.

That sounds a lot like how FCNL lobbies.

Exactly. They both involve relationship-building and learning what matters to the other party, whether that’s a country or a member of Congress, so you can move closer to what you both want.

Why is diplomacy seen in such a negative light by many in the U.S.?

Our leaders have bought into the fantasy that coercion and force get the U.S. all the benefits at no cost—at least to themselves and most people in the U.S. The idea that we should engage in diplomacy, to get a lot of the benefit but at some cost, seems hard to adjust to. Yet the cost of war is actually very high—in the lives affected, and in the way it shapes how other countries see us. And from a moral perspective, it’s also very high. Right now our national bias skews these calculations so much that it takes diplomacy off the table, and that’s a big problem.

Yet the U.S. seems like it can do diplomacy well.

The U.S. has tremendous diplomatic assets. I think of when the U.S. was negotiating the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons in 2013. The only reason that worked is the U.S. had a massive number of talented, experienced people in the State Department and Defense Department who could work through all of the twists and turns of that issue with all the parties involved. The Iran deal is another example of very effective diplomacy by U.S. diplomats who have put the time in over many years to understand what the Iranians value and what motivates them.

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION: GET MY WILL DONE!


To protect your loved ones and make your future wishes a reality, every adult should have an updated will.

Please consider including a gift to the Friends Committee on National Legislation in your will. You’ll ensure that our shared work for peace and justice continues for generations to come.

Getting your will current doesn’t have to be time consuming or expensive. We’re glad to help. Contact Mary Comfort Ferrell, Planned Giving Director: 202-903-2539 or marycomfort@fcnl.org

The budget cuts and reorganization happening right now in the State Department are very concerning. We are getting rid of talented people and the nonviolent tools we have to solve problems. We probably won't realize how much of a benefit our diplomacy has given us until we don't have those resources.

How long does diplomacy take?

Diplomacy never really ends. An agreement like the Iran nuclear deal takes years of negotiation to arrive at, and then you need to keep talking to address issues that arise while the deal is in effect. The key is that by continuing to talk you have a chance to resolve disagreements, violations, and misunderstandings that might arise. For diplomacy to work, all parties need to stay engaged. 

A Look Back

Promoting Diplomacy at Sea


1972

"We hope and believe that the oceans, at least the deep seabeds, offer the next great opportunity for extending the area of peace – through law, through just treaties, and effective international organizations."

~Samuel Levering, testifying before the House Oceanography Subcommittee

Working as volunteer Friends in Washington in the 1970s, Samuel and Miriam Levering advocated for an extension of international law to cover the world's oceans.

Their efforts helped shape the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which opened for signatures in 1982 and took effect in 1994. The treaty is a critical tool to peacefully resolve conflicts on the high seas. Today, climate change; Arctic ice melt; and increasing competition for oil, gas, and other resources in and below the oceans make the treaty more relevant than ever. Yet, despite widespread support, the U.S. has not yet ratified it.

FCNL continues to advocate for ratification as way opens. As Samuel wrote in the *Washington Newsletter* in 1972, "We believe that working for the right use of the oceans is...a spiritual mission to which we are called in this particular point in history—a practical application of God's love for all men and for this world." 



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Sustaining the Iran Deal

As the world focuses on the threat of nuclear war with North Korea, it's useful to remember that good-faith negotiations can address even high-stakes international disputes. The Iran nuclear deal provides an example of what diplomacy can do—as well as the potential consequences if it is allowed to fail.

The Iran deal makes the world safer

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, better known as the Iran nuclear deal, transformed a volatile and potentially violent situation into fertile grounds for lasting peace. The deal disrupted the trajectory toward war that the U.S. and Iran appeared to be on after years of threats and sanctions.

Intense negotiations that began in the early years of the Obama administration led to the final deal between the U.S., Iran, and five other nations in July 2015. This deal blocked every pathway for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon while reducing the risk of yet another U.S. war in the Middle East. Iran literally poured concrete in its heavy-water nuclear reactor as a result of the deal and opened itself up to the most rigorous inspections ever negotiated as required under the deal.

Over the past two years, Iran has complied with the deal, and the deal has helped to more fully integrate Iran in the international community, an important step in future nonproliferation and diplomatic efforts.

Let the deal work

The truth is that, according to the UN nuclear watchdog (IAEA) reports, Iran is upholding its obligations, and two years into a 15-year deal is not enough time to know its full effects on Iran's international engagement. The U.S. should not look for excuses to violate the deal's terms. Both Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford have testified that remaining in the Iran deal is in the U.S. national security interest.

Yet last fall President Trump failed to certify Iran's compliance with the deal. In January, he threatened to withdraw from the deal by mid-May unless it is radically altered, flagrantly rejecting the advice from diplomatic and nuclear experts around the world.


Preserving the Iran deal stops a slide toward war and guards against the possibility that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons. It also communicates to other nations—such as North Korea—that negotiating with the U.S. is not just a waste of time, and that we can uphold our end of the bargain.

Sustained diplomacy needed

Some of the deal's critics point to other Iranian actions—such as ballistic missile tests and Iranian support for the Assad regime in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon—as reasons to leave the deal and impose new sanctions. Those critics believe the deal is weak because it doesn't address these aspects of Iran's behavior. The fact is the deal as negotiated addresses only nuclear issues, not conventional weapons. In order to address these other issues, we need more diplomacy with Iran, not less.

The U.S. should build on the success of the Iran deal to address Iran's human rights violations and its role in the region. It is a misunderstanding of diplomacy to want to throw out a deal that is addressing one facet of disagreement because it doesn't solve every problem that might arise between parties.

Diplomacy is about a practice of engagement over time. You don't reach a single solution and stop. Instead of using these Iranian actions as an excuse to break the deal, these new issues should make the urgency of sustaining diplomacy all the greater, to provide a platform to address issues as they arise.

Destroying the Iran nuclear deal would be a big mistake, and we would face the consequences for generations. Your members of Congress need to know their constituents expect them to stand up for the deal and for diplomacy. We already have one nuclear crisis with North Korea. Let's not manufacture another one. 

FCNL is conducting a randomized survey of our constituents. If you have received an invitation via email to take the survey, please do so today! The survey should take just a few minutes of your time, and will help us understand how we can be more effective and responsive as an organization.



Bipartisan Dialogue Begins

“Two members of Congress from opposite parties, and they were actually talking with each other!”

“That was unusual in Washington, what we just saw.”



Those are just some of the reactions we heard from audience members at the Quaker Welcome Center’s debut public event. After votes finished for the day on November 15, Reps. Ryan Costello (R-PA) and Anna Eshoo (D-CA) made their way the few blocks to the Center to talk with each other about the need for bipartisanship in addressing climate change.

These representatives are two of the more than 60 who make up the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, a group focused on exploring policy options that address the impacts, causes, and challenges of our changing climate. As the Center becomes better known on Capitol Hill, FCNL expects that more members of Congress and their staff will embrace the opportunity for conversation across differences.

As Rep. Costello commented, ““Most members of Congress want to be bipartisan. These [Quaker Welcome Center] forums are a great opportunity for members of Congress to get together with each other.” The Center is ready to welcome them to those opportunities.

The Washington Post

“The center, [Diane Randall] hopes, will help stem the vitriol by fostering respectful conversation and a search for common ground...She hopes to see people come together to discuss issues on which they may not agree and work constructively on them...”

~ November 2017

The Quaker Welcome Center is a place for dialogue and the promotion of peace, justice, and environmental sustainability.

All are invited to lobby training and silent reflection each Wednesday, with other trainings available by appointment. Contact quakerwelcome@fcnl.org or visit fcnl.org/qwc for more information.

North Korea (from p. 8)

In 2000, years of diplomacy brought the U.S. close to a breakthrough on North Korean missile development. Even in 2008, after North Korean nuclear tests had begun, diplomacy temporarily froze aspects of the country's nuclear program. In the end, both sides wasted the precious time and opportunities that diplomacy presented.

It's both cliché and indisputably true that diplomacy is a marathon, not a sprint. In the short term, it will not be easy nor will its rewards be certain. Both the U.S. and North Korea will find many reasons not to trust each other.

But diplomacy is not about trusting the other party. It is about finding an arrangement in which each side, at each moment, believes it is getting something better than the current alternative. When the alternative just may be a disastrous war, there are strong incentives to work through the disagreements that will inevitably come up and keep negotiating.

The high cost of war

Those who see war as a viable option downplay its costs and denigrate what diplomacy has done. War would be neither quick nor easy. In an unclassified 2017 letter to members of Congress, the Pentagon made clear that only a ground invasion could locate all of North Korea's nuclear program. War would likely escalate, with massive casualties. The last, conventional war on the Korean Peninsula left an estimated 3 million people dead—about 1 in every 10 Koreans. Even if nuclear weapons are not deployed in a conflict today—an “if” gambling on millions of lives—tens or even hundreds of thousands of people might perish in the first *days* of fighting.

Such a war, meanwhile, would strain relations with Japan and South Korea, who would bear the brunt of violence in the Korean Peninsula. It would undermine confidence in the United States among European and other allies outside of Northeast Asia. And it would drive more spending toward the Pentagon, at the expense of other priorities that are already under threat.

Congress can prevent this war

The U.S. is right to take the North Korean threat seriously—but that does not require panicked


recourse to war. The U.S. and its allies can only engage, challenge, and outlast the Kim regime if our nations' leaders ignore the foolish promises of an easy, short war and give the processes of diplomacy and dialogue time to secure those benefits.

Congress has the sole constitutional authority to declare war, and it will be a key decision-maker in whether we go to war with North Korea. Some in Congress may feel that it's politically safer to stay silent, but we must not let them choose their short-term political interests over the long-term interests of the country and people they have promised to serve.

Here's what your members of Congress need to hear you ask them to do:

- » **Speak out publicly in support of diplomacy and against war with North Korea.** These public statements show that Congress is not assenting to the executive branch's inconsistent and escalatory rhetoric that is pushing us toward war.
- » **Support S. 2047 (led by Sen. Chris Murphy) and H.R. 4837 (led by Rep. Ro Khanna).** These bills bar the massive spending required for the president to initiate war with North Korea.

You can speak up, too. If you are worried about the costs and risks of military action, give voice to that worry through conversations, in letters to the editor, and as you volunteer on campaigns. If you wonder why Congress is not asserting its authority over war and peace, ask your elected representatives.

We need to keep the president, and the U.S., from grasping for the tools of war out of panic or fear or a misguided sense that there are no other options. Diplomacy is the only way forward with North Korea. Let's make sure it has the space to work. 

In 2018, FCNL Advocacy Teams are lobbying Congress to prevent a war with North Korea.

You can join them. Learn more:
fcnl.org/advocacyteams

Diplomacy (from p. 1)

This re-orientation also requires an inward look. Partisanship and polarization is rampant in our domestic political life. When we can't speak civilly to our neighbors, how can we expect to value and practice dialogue across international boundaries and cultures?

Diplomacy doesn't require admiration or even trust between the parties. It does require an orientation toward continuing conversation and a willingness to listen to other perspectives. It is, in its way, a spiritual discipline of endeavoring to speak to the Divine that lives in each of us.

FCNL works by creating space for common ground. We lobby Republicans and Democrats alike and support opportunities—such as the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus—for members of Congress to work together across party lines. We have literally created space where dialogue is possible in the new Quaker Welcome Center. And we urge our government to pursue policies that promote diplomacy, encouraging U.S. participation with other nations in addressing problems that need the world's collective strength.

“Friends” and “enemies;” “us” and “them”—these distinctions are less important than the common problems and ties that bind us together. Our nation has a choice between digging deeper into these distinctions and continue to separate ourselves from each other and the world, or coming out from behind those walls. We need to model what that looks like in a country that often forgets—and we must urge our leaders to make choices that make our country stronger. 



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Checking Our President on North Korea

President Trump and other U.S. leaders seem almost eager for a war with North Korea, with their tough talk and tweeted taunts. South Korean efforts to pause both military exercises and North Korean provocations while building small pockets of trust around the Winter Olympics are the first encouraging signs in months. But too many U.S. officials are downplaying or dismissing South Korea's initiative. In mid-January, 38 minutes of an ultimately false emergency alert terrified Hawaiians and the world precisely because its warning of incoming missiles seemed so credible.

A disastrous war is not the only way to stop North Korea's nuclear proliferation and provocations. Diplomacy and peacebuilding offer the possibility for something better. Dialogue and determination have secured U.S. interests and avoided war in the past. We must give these strategies time to work again—and Congress has a role to play.

Senators and representatives have been largely silent on the threat of war with North Korea. That silence needs to end. Every member should speak

out against war and support legislation (S. 2047/H.R. 4837) to stop the president's stumbling toward war.

Diplomatic openings with North Korea

The terrifying tension on the Korean Peninsula today did not build up overnight. Relaxing it will take time as well.

While previous agreements with North Korea ultimately unraveled, and North Korea ultimately acquired nuclear weapons, those agreements also provided essential opportunities to improve the situation. They were interim steps to buy time for further negotiations. Diplomacy always progresses step by step.

The 1994 Agreed Framework deeply curtailed North Korea's nuclear weapons development for nearly a decade. Even after its collapse—for which the United States shares a large degree of responsibility—the delay significantly set back North Korean nuclear development.

(continued on p. 6)