



# KOREA

## MANAGING A NUCLEAR CRISIS

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM 2018

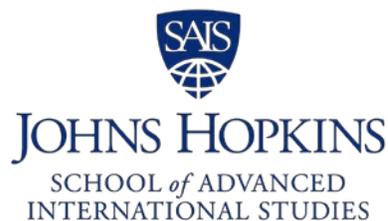
# **Conflict Management Program Field Trip to Korea**

## **Korea: Managing a Nuclear Crisis**

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Jacket Design: Zindzi Thompson, SAIS, Washington, DC

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# Korea: Managing a Nuclear Crisis

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## Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BATNA	Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BTWC	Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence
CBM	Confidence Building Measure
CD	Conference on Disarmament
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CSA	Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
DHID	Dandong Honxiang Industrial Development Co. Ltd.
DoD	United States Department of Defense
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ELWR	Experimental Light Water Reactor
FMCT	Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty
FTA	China-Japan-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBMs	Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
KINU	Korea Institute for National Unification
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MAF	Mongolian Armed Forces
MND	Republic of Korea, Ministry of Defense
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NAPCI	Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative
NEAFTA	Northeast Asian Free Trade Area

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMD	National Missile Defense
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSA	Negative Security Assurances
NWFZ	Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
OPCON	Wartime Operational Control
OPCW	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
PACOM	United States Pacific Command
PAP	People's Armed Police
PLA	Chinese People's Liberation Army
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
PTBT	Partial Test Ban Treaty
RIAC	Russian International Affairs Council
ROK	Republic of Korea
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
THAAD	Theater High Altitude Area Defense
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USFK	United States Forces Korea
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMDs	Weapons of Mass Destruction





## DPRK major missile launches 2017



**Hwasong-14**  
Illustration based on KCNA photo released July 4



### Since March

March 6	May 14	May 21	May 29	July 4	29 August	15 September	29 November
Hwasong-7 / Scud ER short range ballistic missile	Hwasong-12 intermediate range ballistic missile	Pukguksong-2 / KN-15 / Polaris-2 medium range ballistic missile	Hwasong-7 / Scud ER short range ballistic missile	<b>Hwasong-14 intercontinental ballistic missile</b>	Hwasong-12 intercontinental ballistic missile	Hwasong-12 intercontinental ballistic missile	Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile
Launched from Sohae	Kusong	Pukchang	Wonsan	Panghyon	Chagang	Sunan	Sain Ni
Distance flown 1,000 km	787 km	500 km	450 km	933 km	2,700 km	3,700 km	950 km
Altitude reached 260 km	2,111.5 km			2,802 km	550 km	770 km	4,475 km

Sources: SouthKoreadefence/KCNA/NuclearThreatInitiative/GlobalSecurity/missiledefenseadvocacy/CSIS/US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University



## Introduction

P. Terrence Hopmann and Sinisa Vukovic

In late January 2018 sixteen master's degree students and two professors of Conflict Management at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies travelled to Seoul, South Korea, to analyze the conflict with North Korea, especially regarding its nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs. This was part of an annual course that provides students with an opportunity to apply principles of conflict management learned in the classroom to a real-time, ongoing conflict *in situ*.<sup>1</sup>

We could hardly have chosen a better time to visit Korea. By the time of our travel, the issues we were studying were moving at a fast pace. Preparations for the PyeongChang Winter Olympics were well underway and symbols and signs of the spirit of the “peace Olympics” were visible everywhere. Our trip also came after an autumn in which North Korea had successfully tested new nuclear devices, claiming that one constituted a thermonuclear (hydrogen) bomb, as well as new intermediate and long-range missiles, the last of which possibly had sufficient range to reach the continental United States. These weapons developments were accompanied by increasingly hostile rhetoric exchanged between US President Donald Trump, who threatened North Korea with “fire and fury,” and North Korean President Kim Jong-un. However, shortly before our arrival, Kim delivered his 2018 New Year's address in which he expressed an interest in meeting with his South Korean counterparts in an effort to defuse tensions on the Korean Peninsula at the time of the Olympics. In return, South Korean President Moon Jae-in invited North Korea to participate in the February Olympics as part of a unified Korean team. As this book is going into publication in mid-April 2018, these tentative initiatives have transformed into a visit by senior South Korean officials to Washington, who extended an invitation from DPRK President Kim Jong-un to meet with US President Trump in May of 2018, which he accepted. Kim has also gone so far as to suggest a willingness to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula in exchange for appropriate political recognition and security guarantees for North Korea from the US President. Although this came as a surprise to many in Washington and around the world, we saw definite signs of this developing process during our time in Korea, as officials with whom we met in Seoul, concerned about the escalating hostilities on the peninsula, had embarked on a serious diplomatic offensive to try to bring the two hostile parties together in an effort to reduce tensions and step back from a possible war that would inevitably be devastating to the people of South Korea.

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<sup>1</sup> Previous books are Israel 2018; Ukraine 2017; South China Sea 2017; Sri Lanka January 2016; Senegal/Casamance January 2016; Colombia January 2015; Mindanao January 2014 and 2011; Nagorno Karabakh 2013; Tunisia 2012; Kosovo 2010; Cyprus 2009; Northern Ireland 2008; Haiti 2007 and 2006. Reports from previous Field Trips are available at <https://www.sais-jhu.edu/content/conflict-management#research>.

The sixteen chapters in this volume by each of our participating students represent an analysis of different aspects of the Korean conflict. These reports are based on extensive background reading by all of the authors prior to our trip, as well as a series of briefings by experts in the Washington area during the fall of 2017. During our trip to Seoul, we met with senior officials of the ROK government, including from the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Unification;<sup>2</sup> with senior members of the National Assembly who had extensive experience in dealing with inter-Korean relations; with experts on North Korea from universities, think tanks, and government-run institutes; with groups of defectors from North Korea now living in Seoul; and with senior officials of the US and Japanese embassies in Seoul. A full list of our meetings may be found in an Appendix at the end of this volume.

One message that stood out for many of us from the people we met in Seoul was that there was great concern about the escalating rhetoric between the US and the DPRK and the risk that it might lead to a miscalculation or even an intentional decision to initiate violent actions with catastrophic consequences. This led to a broad consensus that South Korea had to take the initiative to try to reduce tensions on the peninsula and to complement the policy of “maximum pressure” advocated by the US with what they frequently referred to as “maximum engagement.” This was not conceived as a substitute for the policy of pressure and sanctions on North Korea, but rather as a complementary policy that would combine positive and negative inducements to try to open negotiations to resolve the escalating conflict before it passes the point of no return. The events that are taking place as we complete our manuscript, therefore, appear to be the fulfillment of these efforts by Seoul to open a serious dialogue between the US and the DPRK, although there are also potential problems that lie ahead, as detailed in the following chapters.

Of course, in a fast-moving environment it is impossible to judge how events may play out, and much may have changed by the time this volume gets into the hands of our readers. We do not know, as we go to press, whether the meeting between Presidents Trump and Kim will ever take place, and, if it does, what the outcome of that meeting will be. Will the North Korean leader really be willing to denuclearize under terms that will provide his country with sufficient guarantees of security from foreign invasion or internal collapse? It was clear from our meetings that Kim Jong-un does not want to end up like Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi, who halted development or, in the case of Libya, even gave up nuclear weapons only to be deposed and eventually killed. Nor do we know whether the United States or South Korea will be willing to offer the DPRK the kind of guarantees that will assure Kim that he will be safe from experiencing a similar fate if he agrees to give up his nuclear weapons. We do not even know what the North Korean leader means by denuclearization, which could range anywhere from a simple cessation of tests and freezing the status quo to fully rejoining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as its Additional Protocol, as a non-nuclear-weapons

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, tentative meetings with the presidential administration in the Blue House did not materialize due to the newly-opened negotiations with North Korea involving their participation in the upcoming Winter Olympic games that fully occupied many senior government officials during our time in Seoul.

state with full-scale verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), or any of a myriad of possibilities in between these two outcomes. What is evident is that, under the best of circumstances, a long series of very complex negotiations, extending well beyond a Summit meeting of two heads of state, will be required to resolve these complex issues. Alternatively, if either party backs away from its agreement to open dialogue, or if the dialogue turns out badly, we could witness a far more dangerous and potentially violent situation develop on the Korean Peninsula and, indeed, throughout East Asia. Of course, we cannot provide answers to these complex questions in the essays that follow, written at a time of rapidly moving events and a great deal of uncertainty about how they will play out, but hopefully these essays will provide some valuable context for understanding whatever trajectory emerges in East Asia in the months and years ahead.

As is always case for a project like this, there are many people to acknowledge who made this trip, and therefore this report, possible. First, we would like to thank the Starr Foundation, which provided us with a generous grant to help subsidize the costs of our project. Second, at SAIS, we would like to thank Dr. Jae Ku, Director of the US-Korea Institute (USKI) and Dr. Seo Ho Lee, Academic Coordinator of USKI, for their advice and assistance in arranging meetings for our group in Seoul; USKI has been an invaluable resource for SAIS and, indeed, for the international community, in understanding events on the Korean Peninsula. In Seoul, we would like to express our special gratitude to Professor Moon Chung-in of Yonsei University and Dr. Kim Hyun-wook of the Korean National Diplomatic Academy, who were instrumental in arranging for us to meet with an impressive group of officials and experts in Seoul and for providing advice throughout the preparation of our trip. Finally, a special expression of gratitude goes to Ms. Isabelle Talpain-Long, Program Coordinator of the Conflict Management Program at SAIS, who provided invaluable assistance in all logistical aspects of our program and many hours of work in preparing this manuscript for publication. We could not have done this trip without the assistance and cooperation of all these individuals and institutions, and we are all most grateful for their efforts in making our trip and this volume possible.



## **Part I: Understanding North Korea**



## **Military Rationale Behind North Korea's Nuclear Weapons**

Simon Arias

The Korean conflict is one of the most pressing matters in current events; all circulating around one prominent issue, nuclear weapons. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has persisted in its directive to complete its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles program. In 2017, the United States (US) had initiated a "maximum pressure" campaign that has intensified as the Trump Administration pressured other states to follow suit, especially the People's Republic of China (China) and the Russian Federation (Russia).

A fundamental question is why does North Korea desire to be a functioning nuclear power? This chapter will analyze the North Korean regime and its military setup and will present an overview of North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities. This chapter will explore potential military rationales behind North Korea's nuclear weapons program by analyzing the dynamics among the parties, consequences of US involvement with other regimes on the nuclear issue, and how US-DPRK experiences have shaped the behavior of Kim Jong-un. An aggressive rationale would likely be intended to unify the Korean peninsula by force under the control of the DPRK and to remove all foreign troops, which would be directly against the interests of the US and the Republic of Korea (ROK). In contrast, a defensive deterrent rationale would entail maintaining a credible and functioning nuclear strike capability to retaliate against a US and/or ROK attack. Aside from these two, a rationale focused on negotiations would use the DPRK nuclear and missile programs as a bargaining chip to enhance their position. The last, being the most probable rationale, addresses Kim Jong-un's interests deduced from an assessment of the variables and analysis of costs and benefits compared to other rationales. Finally, recommendations will be provided regarding viable options, considering the interests of the parties with respect to the most probable rationale.

### **DPRK Background and Development of Nuclear and Missile Program**

From the perspective of the North Koreans, their nuclear weapons program is central to achieving these objectives. These interests are all derived from events that have transpired in the past and that have, consequently, shaped the current frames of the conflict. From the nation's inception, North Korea played on the relationships it held with the Soviet Union and China until these alliances declined (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 242; SAIS Group Meeting with Jenny Town, Assistant Director of US Korea Institute at SAIS, Washington DC, 2 November 2017). The North Koreans bounced between the Soviet Union and China, who both presented a credible deterrent. However, Ambassador Robert Gallucci described the way the Soviet Union sold out the Cubans in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which led the North Korean's to question whether the same would be done to them. North Korean bilateral relations with the Chinese also faced scrutiny when the Chinese refused to provide the North Koreans with nuclear technology, in addition to, experiencing multiple skirmishes along the DPRK-

Chinese border (SAIS Group Meeting with Ambassador Robert Gallucci, Washington DC, 16 November 2017). There was a sense of dependency and consequently disappointment felt by the North Korean regime, which contributed to the '*Juche*' ideology of a self-reliant and self-dependent narrative (see chapter by Noar).

### Nuclear and Missile Capabilities

To launch a nuclear weapon, Kim Jong-un would need the support of both the highest ranking military commanding officer and nuclear scientist. Although there are three separate actors that work in unison to make a nuclear strike occur, Professor Park Young-ja shared insight on how Kim Jong-un has consolidated his power and maintains considerable influence over both the military and nuclear scientists (SAIS Group Meeting at Korean Institute of National Unification, Seoul, 25 January 2018). The DPRK conducted its first nuclear weapon test in October of 2006, effectively threatening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and drawing serious concern throughout the international community (IAEA 2006; McCurry, 2017). In response, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on the DPRK, called to cease development of their nuclear program, and to remain in and abide by the obligations and safeguards in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) non-proliferation treaty (NPT) (United Nations 2006; see also chapter by Sloat). Further nuclear weapons testing conducted by the DPRK in May of 2009 and February 2013 shows the DPRK's strengthening nuclear capabilities while violating Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006) and 1874 (2009) (IAEA 2013; United Nations 2006 and 2009). In September of 2017, North Korea conducted its sixth and largest nuclear weapons test, claiming the successful detonation of a thermonuclear weapon (Dixit and Murphy 2017; NTI 2018). North Korean officials claim they detonated a hydrogen bomb at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site that is estimated by South Korean officials to have a yield of 50 to 60 kilotons, five to six times stronger than the previous test conducted in September 2016 (McCurry 2017; Reuter 2017). These events demonstrate the progressive development of North Korea's nuclear programs and the continuing effectiveness of their nuclear test program. What remains now is improving the functioning capabilities of delivering these Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

The DPRK has actively improved upon its ballistic missile programs with its testing of the Hwasong-14 ICBM on July 4, 2017, their first successful Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) test, coming after a series of failed missile tests (Reider 2017). Described as an intermediate-range missile by the US military, the Hwasong-14 ICBM is capable of traveling a distance of 6,700 kilometers, which some experts suggest it could reach Alaska (BBC 2017). On November 29, 2017, the DPRK tested their Hwasong-15 ICBM, a more powerful and larger ballistic missile than its previous counterpart (Panda 2017). The Hwasong-15, designated by the US as KN-22, seems to possess a striking range capable of reaching the continental US, an estimated distance of approximately 8,500 to 13,000 kilometers (CSIS 2017). Although the Hwasong-15 is considerably more capable of delivering a larger, more powerful payload and can deploy countermeasures that can challenge National Missile Defense (NMD) systems,

additional tests on guidance, re-entry and payload protection are required before it can become fully operational (Elleman 2017). In 2017, American satellites have captured activity at the Sohae satellite launch site, which may suggest that the North Koreans were planning additional tests (38 North, 2018). The North Koreans claim launching satellites and long-range missiles is their sovereign right; South Korean defense officials claim, on the other hand, that it is illegal given existing international resolutions (SAIS Group Meeting, ROK Ministry of National Defense, Seoul, 24 January 2018).

### **North Korea's Military Rationale: Aggressive, Defensive, or Bargaining Chip?**

Since the 1990s, the North Korean's nuclear program has garnered international attention and is the focal point behind the Korea conflict that has included numerous negotiation attempts. The discovery of the Yongbyon nuclear facility by American surveillance satellites in April 1982 drew concern as to whether the North Koreans intended to develop civilian nuclear energy or pursue nuclear weapons (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 242-243). It was not until February of 1987 that the US discovered that the nuclear power plants at Yongbyon housed a series of "thick-walled cells in the typical configuration for separation of plutonium," leading officials to suspect that preparations for a nuclear weapons program may have been underway (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 243). Although North Korea's nuclear ambition originates back to the Korean War, it was not until 1992 that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discovered the full extent of their nuclear activity (NTI 2018).

An IAEA inspection of the Yongbyon North Korean nuclear facility in May of 1992 revealed three ounces of plutonium in powdered form (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 258-259). Upon testing these samples, IAEA inspectors concluded that there had to be more plutonium and that the North Koreans were hiding something, which resulted in intensified suspicion and accusations that the DPRK was violating provisions of the IAEA nuclear safeguards agreement (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 256-259). From the North Korean perspective, there are serious issues on accountability and enforcement when it comes to dealing with the US and the "American-dominated" international community (SAIS Group Meeting with Ambassador Robert Gallucci, Washington DC, 16 November 2017). Taking for example the IAEA "special inspections" in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, intelligence information was shared with the IAEA that revealed that Iraq held secret locations of nuclear projects (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 257; see chapter by Hutson). During the negotiations for the Agreed Framework of 1994, the same IAEA "special inspections" targeted two Yongbyon suspected nuclear waste sites, which constituted a clear deal-breaker to the DPRK (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 330-331).

Another contentious matter was the ROK-US joint military exercises. When the 1992 "Team Spirit" exercise was cancelled, it served as the only evidence of improved relations with the United States for the North Koreans (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 261). By renewing the exercises, the North Koreans resumed development of their nuclear program, since the Team Spirit exercises are viewed as a preparation for a pre-emptive attack against North Korea

(Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 266). Ultimately, the 1994 Agreed Framework broke down when the US reneged on agreed provisions to be provided to North Korea, such as heavy fuel oil and the construction of light-water nuclear reactors for civilian energy uses, which contributed to the growing mistrust among North Koreans, leaving them to believe that they are better off pursuing their nuclear program (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 442-443).

The top priority for the North Korean regime is survival and stability. They have an interest in maintaining power within their territory and to extend power into the international system. The North Koreans have intensely studied previous cases, such as Iraq and Libya, because of what happened to the leadership of those two countries. In the Iraq case, the North Koreans believe that the American military buildup and the tactics used against Iraq resulted in Saddam Hussein being deposed, captured, and executed (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 307). The Libya case showed that, after Muammar Gaddafi surrendered weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, as demanded by the United States in exchange for US guarantee not to promote “regime change,” he was nonetheless killed in a rebellion supported by the US and its allies (Schwarz 2017). Kim Jong-un has a genuine fear of regime change and, having learned from both the Iraq and Libya cases, has no intention of repeating their mistakes by giving up his nuclear deterrent without binding guarantees of regime security and survival.

#### An Aggressive Rationale

Looking at North Korea from the outside, they are characterized as “belligerent” and “aggressive” given their numerous weapons tests and provocative actions (ICG N294 2018; NTI 2018). The West generally sees North Korea as the provocative party within the conflict, reinforced by the mistreatment of Americans such as Otto Warmbier, who died while unconscious shortly after returning from North Korea in 2017, and the anti-American propaganda that permeates throughout North Korean society (ICG N293 2018; Daniels and Calia 2018). Blatantly ignoring international condemnation and Security Council resolutions aimed to stop the North Korean’s nuclear development and missiles program show that the DPRK adamantly opposes actions deemed threatening to their “supreme interests” (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 264; United Nations 2009; see also chapter by Sloat in this volume).

North Korean actions across the international community, some specifically toward the US, as well as the dissemination of propaganda to the North Korean population, shapes the perception that the DPRK harbors aggressive intentions. This sort of rationale plays into an asymmetric escalation doctrine, as characterized by Narang (Dizikes 2014), and is used to deter conventional attacks by retaliating with the first use of nuclear weapons (Narang 2014, 19). The threat of a first nuclear strike by the DPRK in response to a conventional, non-nuclear attack from the US-ROK, increases the credibility of a threat and essentially escalates aggressive behavior (Dizikes 2014; Narang 2014, 19). It is widely believed that North Korea would utilize their nuclear weapons to deter the US from responding to a North Korean

invasion of South Korea by threatening to retaliate against the US mainland, if US forces assisted South Korea in defending their homeland.

To consider the possibility of an aggressive strategy, pushing for unification under DPRK terms and conditions, the North Koreans would need to seriously assess the credibility of US extended deterrence for the ROK (SAIS Group Meeting at Sejong Institute, Seoul, 22 January 2018). If American extended deterrence is uncertain and not considered to be credible, then it would be highly likely that Kim Jong-un would proceed in testing coercive actions to sever US-ROK alliance and pursue unification. If American extended deterrence remains strong and credible, then any aggressive action against South Korea would be futile and contradictory to the interests of Kim Jong-un. His highest priority is regime stability ensuring its security and survival, but he is likely not suicidal personally or for his state. Pursuing an aggressive rationale would surely result in the regime being toppled and severe damage being done to all parties involved; thus, arguing for an aggressive posture under such conditions would not be likely.

#### A Defensive Rationale

The North Koreans are aware of American military forces across the DMZ, where they are based in South Korea (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 261-262). In addition to the estimated 28,500 American troops stationed in South Korea, there are also approximately 50,000 troops stationed in Japan and more than 5,000 troops in Guam (Agence France Presse 2017). Furthermore, American naval forces include the USS Ronald Reagan supercarrier strike group, with possible nuclear submarines in undisclosed locations (Agence France Presse 2017). These conditions contribute to the North Korean perspective that they are the target of an aggressive actor—the United States—and must do everything in their power to deter a potential attack. Since Kim Jong-un's main concern is regime stability, acquiring nuclear weapons and missile capabilities based on deterring a credible ROK-US attack would explain a defensive deterrent rationale.

Fear is the motivating factor in a defensive rationale. Dr. Hyun-Wook Kim and Professor Jung Bong-Geun noted that Kim Jong-un may believe his nuclear and missile program can effectively deter American forces, by threatening retaliation, and protect against unification attempts initiated by South Korea, thereby being consistent with a defensive deterrent rationale (ICG N293 2018; SAIS Group Meeting Korean National Diplomatic Academy, Seoul, 22 January 2018). This describes the assured retaliation posture for nuclear strategy, which incorporates a credible threat of a direct nuclear response to an attack from a foe, essentially deterring an attack or coercion from another state (Narang, 2014, 17; Dizikes 2014). This strategy could effectively explain North Korean military behavior and their rationale to pursue their nuclear program. Archives from past diplomatic cables between the DPRK and former communist allies in Eastern Europe corroborate this explanation (SAIS Group Meeting with Ambassador Robert Gallucci, Washington DC, 16 November 2017).

However, an obstacle for this rationale stems not from the North Korean side but from the US. Then President-elect Trump explicitly indicated that he would not accept a nuclear capable North Korea, declaring through a tweet “It won’t happen” (Haberman and Sanger 2017; Trump 2017). During his 2018 State of the Union address, President Trump delivered another warning about North Korea’s nuclear objectives, where he eluded to “not repeat[ing] the mistakes of the past,” in tandem with boasting about the effectiveness of his administration’s “maximum pressure” policy (Daniels and Calia 2018). This might be rhetoric, or it could be President Trump posturing as an unpredictable actor, one who seriously considers threatening a pre-emptive attack on the DPRK to thwart their nuclear and missiles program. The US cannot destroy all the DPRK’s retaliatory capability in a rapid first strike, which would result in retaliation by either nuclear or conventional forces against the US, ROK, and/or Japan. Furthermore, a pre-emptive or preventive strike would confirm the fears described by the DPRK and would only justify retaliation. Continuing North Korean efforts to complete their nuclear and missile capabilities may push President Trump toward acting on his declarations. This rationale would then seem to be risky and counter-productive for the North Koreans.

#### Bargaining Chip for Negotiations

It might be possible that viewing the conflict in a two-dimensional way locks the actors in a box of limited opportunity and imagination. As the conflict develops, experts from the Sejong Institute and defectors from the North Korea Strategy Center have noticed that North Korean actions, such as provocative testing and participating in the 2018 Winter Olympics, could support an aggressive or defensive rationale (SAIS Group Meeting, Seoul, 22 and 24 January 2018). Confining the parties and their range of opportunities to this limited dichotomous dimension fails to incorporate interesting behavior and tactics that could emerge. It may be plausible that a third option is available, where the DPRK’s nuclear program can serve as a bargaining chip for negotiations in exchange for the appropriate guarantees from the US.

The North Korean nuclear program was the subject of negotiation and bargaining earlier in the conflict and is perceived as one to the outside world. However, Mr. Lee Sungju indicated how the North Koreans could argue against this by turning to the Iran nuclear deal as an example of a misstep when using a nuclear program as a bargaining chip with the US (SAIS Group Meeting with Citizens’ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, Washington DC, 23 November 2017). The Iranian nuclear deal has come under intense criticism by President Donald Trump, who threatens to rescind the nuclear deal with Iran (Nebehay 2017). Such a course of action demonstrates a lack of American accountability and trustworthiness, which contributes to the North Korean’s negative view of genuine diplomatic agreements with the United States.

According to experts from the Sejong Institute, the nuclear program provides domestic security guarantees from internal threats such as civil unrest and the costs associated with building the nuclear program (SAIS Group Meeting, Seoul, 22 January 2018). Within the societal constructs of North Korea there is still a strong narrative that supports the regime and

Kim Jong-un's tight grip on power (SAIS Group Meeting with Mr. Lee Sungju, Seoul, 23 January 2018). By achieving what is considered their destiny, this narrative asserts that the stability of Kim Jong-un's regime rests upon completing the nuclear and missiles programs (SAIS Group Meeting at Korean Institute of National Unification, Seoul, 25 January 2018). Moving toward completing their nuclear program would enhance Kim Jong-un's domestic power and be a blow to the international nonproliferation order. Moreover, reaching full operational nuclear weapon and missile capabilities could lead Kim Jong-un into making a decision that could create a "point of no return." Reaching the precipice may instigate pre-emptive action from the United States, which could very well be another "point of no return."

Kim Jong-un could decide to entertain negotiations, using their nuclear program to strengthen the DPRK's bargaining position. Kim Jong-un's 2018 New Year Address expressed his genuine willingness to enter inter-Korean dialogue, welcoming officials from South Korea (NCNK 2018). Concluding from a meeting between Kim Jong-un and South Korean officials, it became clear that the DPRK's reasoning for their nuclear weapons are a direct result of a perceived US military threat, where if security guarantees are made and threats eliminated, denuclearization and normalization could be achieved (Sang-hun and Landler 2018). By not attempting any provocations, such as nuclear and ballistic missile testing while dialogue takes place, the North Koreans can demonstrate good faith and achieve a potential meeting with President Trump by the end of May (Sang-hun and Landler 2018; Agence France Presse 2018). By doing so, Kim Jong-un is perceived as the one reaching out for negotiations and exploring possible zones of agreement with the US and the ROK. If negotiations do not work out, then the regime can continue developing their weapons programs and would only have to wait a few more years until a new US or ROK administration takes office; the conflict, however, would still be in a heightened state.

This rationale could lead to a peace accord and a normalization of relations among the parties. It is evident that the North Koreans are interested in maintaining regime survival, while achieving this through negotiations would include security guarantees and a formal peace process (SAIS Group Meeting at Sejong Institute, Seoul, 22 January 2018). There are two underlying variables that present a challenge to this train of thought: deep insecurities the North Korean regime holds regarding threats to the state, and whether the DPRK can coexist or even unify with the ROK (see the chapter by Dang). The DPRK's insecurities are centralized around the perceived threat of US-ROK attack, in addition to discontent among the North Korean domestic population (SAIS Group Meeting at North Korea Strategy Center, Seoul, 24 January 2018). The question of North-South coexistence stems from the fear that the North Korean people will revolt against the regime after seeing how prosperous the South is (SAIS Group Meeting at Sejong Institute, Seoul, 22 January 2018). These serious concerns could be addressed by signing a peace accord and normalizing relations. Achieving peace among the parties alleviates the fear of any perceived military threat. Reaching an agreement that can lift sanctions and allow civil nuclear energy, while abiding by IAEA safeguards and inspections, can improve the North Korean economy and energy resources. By entering the global

economy, as China has encouraged them in the past, economic conditions in the North would improve, addressing domestic economic frustration and thereby diminishing threats of internal dissent (SAIS Group Meeting at North Korea Strategy Center, Seoul, 24 January 2018; see also chapter by Chapman). Coexistence, though entirely possible, is fully dependent on the levels of confidence among the parties and mutual accountability on implementing a fair deal.

## **Conclusion**

The Korean conflict incorporates longstanding issues that are ingrained into the minds of the parties. Evident throughout all rationales are the North Korean regime's interests in security and prestige. Security of the state is co-dependent with the security of the regime, which is embodied in Kim Jong-un. Prestige, as recognized globally, is achieving recognition as a nuclear power and joining the exclusive 'nuclear power club' reserved for powerful actors, such as the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council. From the domestic perspective, prestige would translate into unifying the North Korean identity, based on recognition as a nuclear power, compensating for the economic costs and personal losses derived from pursuing the program. Mistrust and lack of accountability have undermined the perspectives of all parties over time, shaping attitudes and narratives into what some may consider to be 'intractable,' with no resolution in sight. Due to ingrained mistrust, many believe that violent conflict is inevitable, even though such an option is the least desirable. Negotiations should originate from a genuine willingness to engage the parties and be maintained as dialogue continues. Once achieved, the parties can start to address the root causes of the conflict.

## **Recommendations**

### To All Parties

- **Establish a set of shared principles.** Principles such as peace on the Korean peninsula, commitment to denuclearization and nonproliferation, respect of sovereignty, non-aggression, should be affirmed by all the parties and serve as the foundation for confidence-building measures that could lead to an agreement built on these principles.

### To the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

- **Do not test American extended deterrence.** American extended deterrence continues to be credible. Threats are taken extremely seriously and should not be instigated.
- **Maintain willingness and genuine interest in negotiations** by not rescinding offers, such as the freeze of nuclear and ballistic missile testing while dialogues continue.

### To the Republic of Korea

- **Develop a clear and firm way to communicate with the North Koreans.** By doing so the ROK could avoid being misled or manipulated by the DPRK. Keeping a continuity of policy can prevent any misconceptions from occurring.

- **Coordinate with the United States on a unified and cohesive North Korean policy.** Doing this would negate DPRK efforts to drive a wedge through the ROK-US alliance.

To the United States

- **Do not conduct a pre-emptive or preventive strike** on the DPRK.
- **Develop a unified and cohesive North Korean policy with the ROK** so that the DPRK cannot take advantage of any gaps between the United States and the Republic of Korea.
- **Maintain willingness and genuine interest** by not being provocative toward the DPRK, such as rudely denying meeting Kim Jong-un for some unjustifiable reason.
- **Consider pausing the joint military exercise with ROK as a reciprocal concession to the DPRK.** Even with Kim Jong-un understanding why the US-ROK performs the joint military exercises, if pausing them bears little to no cost, then it should be considered. The United States should review potential options for concessions that entail little or no significant cost and could be meaningful for the DPRK.



## **The *Juche* Ideology: Unilateralism and Self-Reliance?**

Ariane Noar

The common discourse in the United States (US) on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) typically paints a picture of Kim Jong-un as a deranged leader who might at any time use his country's nuclear weapons to endanger the world. Many assume that North Korean citizens have either been brainwashed by the Kim regime or are so oppressed that they dare not speak out. While there are elements of truth in this image, it is incorrect and irresponsible to relegate all of North Korean society and its government to this irrational mindset. Further, relying on this image potentially undermines the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts to resolve the Korean conflict peacefully, as they do not take into consideration the perception and cost-benefit analysis of these efforts from the regime's perspective. In order to better hone diplomatic efforts moving forward, it is therefore critical to gain a more nuanced understanding of the ideological underpinnings of North Korean government and society.

The *juche* ideology, based on the three pillars of i) political independence; ii) economic self-reliance; and iii) national self-defense, has been the driving philosophy of the North Korean state since it was formally introduced under Kim Il-sung. *Juche* was taught in schools across the country and used throughout North Korean history for policy-making in diverse fields such as agriculture, education, politics, foreign policy, and security. Although the use and ubiquity of *juche* has changed over time, its core ideas still guide North Korean policy. As such, examining *juche* can shed light on the DPRK's position and how the international community can more effectively encourage it to come to the negotiating table and engage it in more productive discussions during negotiations.

### ***Juche's* History**

Although *juche* was first introduced to the Korean Peninsula in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that Kim Il-sung began to form it into a practical ideology. By then, North Korea had been influenced significantly by both China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) at various times throughout its brief history.

The Soviets took control of North Korea after the peninsula was divided in 1945 and were therefore instrumental in developing the structure and policy of the newly created DPRK. Even after withdrawing its troops in 1948, thousands of Soviet specialists stayed behind to continue to build the country in the USSR's image. This strong Soviet influence continued into the Korean War, as Stalin ultimately granted Kim Il-sung permission to launch his invasion into South Korea. However, Kim Il-sung's relationship with the USSR began to worsen when the Soviets failed to provide the DPRK with their requested levels of support during and after the war. Furthermore, the two disagreed on which economic development policies the DPRK should pursue.

China and the DPRK share a history of resistance against Japanese occupation in Manchuria, which set the stage for Kim Il-sung's initial rise to power as a guerrilla fighter. This common struggle gave Kim Il-sung a personal connection to the Chinese, but is also the basis of significant resentment among Koreans. This is due to a Chinese campaign in the 1930s that aimed to purge all non-Communist Koreans from Manchuria and resulted in the massacre of hundreds of Korean fighters (Sō 2013, 34). Chinese influence in the DPRK rebounded during the Korean War, when Chairman Mao intervened in the Korean War on behalf of the North. However, the DPRK left this assistance largely unacknowledged, and their relationship was subsequently strained during the Sino-Soviet split and the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Chinese and Soviet ideologies and practices had therefore played an important role in Kim Il-sung's rise to power. Before he became President, however, China and the USSR began to support a political faction that opposed Kim Il-sung's party (Sō 2013, 10). This split ultimately sparked Kim Il-sung's adoption and transformation of the *juche* ideology. Kim delivered a speech on December 28, 1955, calling for the establishment of the *juche* ideology in Korea. Over the coming years, he further developed its meaning into a system based foremost on the preservation of Korean nationalism and independence. Therein, he rejected any interference or influence by the Chinese and Soviets and successfully marginalized any political factions associated with either country. *Juche* was then officially included as the guiding principles of the DPRK in the 1967 constitution.

As outlined by Kim Il-sung, the *juche* system centers on a supreme leader (*suryong*), surrounded by concentric circles of power, who guides the collective masses towards the future. While it stems from a Marxist-Leninist doctrine, *juche* has three primary pillars: political independence—*chaju*, economic self-reliance—*charip*, and self-defense—*chawi*. *Juche*'s emphasis on self-reliance is a clear rejection of Korea's historical experience with foreign influence and emphasizes a binary worldview, in which North Korea must perpetually struggle against domination by the rest of the world to maintain its own traditions and way of life.

There are numerous examples of how *juche* transcended the philosophical sphere to have significant practical implications for the DPRK's policies. During *juche*'s initial adoption, Kim Il-sung demonstrated a clear break with Soviet beliefs by applying *juche* to industrialization. Kim proposed a program in which the North would no longer export raw materials and semi-finished goods and would instead develop its industry so that it could become a self-sustaining economy. When the USSR criticized this new approach and attempted to bring the DPRK closer into its sphere of economic influence, Kim instead chose to launch the *chollima* movement, which aimed to boost production by sending government officials, including Kim himself, out to factories and villages to oversee and mobilize their workers. The movement ultimately achieved its goal, as some plants produced double their estimated maximum capacity (Park 2002, 31). It also had the secondary effect of further institutionalizing *juche* within the rural population and strengthening local industry, as it required significant decentralization of government administration (Park 2002, 32).

The DPRK witnessed both the strength and weakness of this *juche* policy in the 1990s, during a period called the “Arduous March.” Although the DPRK had focused its efforts on building a self-reliant economy, it still required significant aid and various imports from abroad in order to function. These primarily came from the USSR, which had already given the DPRK billions in aid and credits for oil and gas, weapons, and other goods by 1984. In 1988, the USSR was exporting \$1.9 billion worth of goods to the DPRK, but only received \$0.9 billion in return (Oberdorfer 1997, 202). This relationship became strained, however, as the Soviet Union’s domestic economic concerns encouraged it to open its arms to the South Koreans. In 1991, the USSR demanded hard currency for any exports to the DPRK, and China refused to make up the difference. As a result, the DPRK had to reduce its petroleum consumption by one-quarter to one-third (Oberdorfer 1997, 233). This, along with large scale flooding, had significant ramifications for North Korean industry, which struggled to produce and distribute enough food. Additionally, the *juche* policies, which sought to close off the DPRK’s economy, prevented the country from importing the necessary food for its population. The DPRK also could not finance imports because it had previously defaulted on its debts to Western parties in 1984. The result of these policies was a mass famine in the DPRK that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 500,000 Koreans (Goodkind, West and Johnson 2011, 3).

Many question how the DPRK’s institutions survived such a significant challenge when other regimes have faced domestic uprisings from lesser crises. The absence of social unrest during the Arduous March demonstrated the strength of the *juche* ideology throughout the country. Rather than abandon isolationism to end the famine, leaders of the DPRK believed that the crisis was an even clearer demonstration of the dangers of being too dependent on another country. This lent further credence to the original focus of *juche* and reaffirmed their commitment to it, even as Kim Il-sung passed away in 1994. Simultaneously, the North Korean population demonstrated their mindset of self-reliance through their response to the crisis. Rather than protest and demand change, they largely turned inwards to cope with the crisis by organizing black markets and other grassroots-level efforts to produce food.

### ***Juche* in Current DPRK Policy**

#### Kim Jong-un’s *juche*

*Juche*’s prominence and meaning have both changed since it was first introduced under Kim Il-sung. Today, it is difficult to know truly how influential the *juche* ideology is to North Korean decision making, particularly given the DPRK’s opaque nature. DPRK experts and North Korean defectors interviewed during our trip have mixed interpretations of its prominence and legitimacy in North Korean society today. Although it is not possible to place an exact value on *juche*’s importance, we can examine various indications.

Much of *juche*’s practical applications created by Kim Il-sung have been amended over time as the dynamics within the government and between the DPRK and the international community have shifted. The DPRK trades with many countries today (see chapter by Sayre), even under the United Nations (UN) sanctions regime, and Kim Jong-un has reached out to

various countries in attempts to improve relations. One clear example of a departure from *juche* is the 2012 performance of a North Korean state-sponsored band, in which they sang Disney theme songs. The North Korean media justified the performance by explaining that the regime sought to “convince its people of the need to learn from the world in order to develop the country” (Sō 2013, 27). In this example, Kim invoked *juche* to justify the government’s policies, even if the policy itself does not follow the ideology.

However, Kim Jong-un also understands that much of his legitimacy stems from Kim Il-sung’s reverential image, which is closely intertwined with the *juche* ideology. The principles of independence and self-reliance still, therefore, form the guiding ideology behind DPRK policymaking. From an institutional perspective, the DPRK’s very political structure was largely a product of Kim Il-sung’s construction of *juche*. Even if the current Kim regime does not practically design its policies with *juche* in mind, the DPRK’s policymaking institutions are inherently shaped by the ideology. This structure will tend to perpetuate itself, as it “has created stakeholders, nurtured them into powerful actors, channeled North Koreans’ behavior along *juche* lines, and shaped their worldview in terms of *juche*. Each of them has an egoistic interest to survive” (Sō 2013, 24).

We can find concrete examples of DPRK policy that illustrate this theoretical prediction in Kim Jong-un’s current policies. He has instituted economic reforms that echo the *chollima* movement by decentralizing industry and promoting autonomy in the labor sector (SAIS Group Meeting, Korea Institute for National Unification, Seoul, 25 January 2018). This intention was also emphasized repeatedly throughout his most recent New Year’s speech. In his speech, Kim referred to the continued focus on implementing “*juche*-oriented socialism” and spent significant time outlining various reforms that seek to “enhance the independence and *juche* character of the national economy.” Kim describes the current progress towards implementing *juche*-based reforms in the metallurgical industry, which resulted in the construction of “an oxygen-blast furnace of our own style.” He also highlights that modernization efforts made in light industry were conducted “by means of our own technology and equipment” and explains that this will improve the range of goods available within the self-sustaining economy (NCNK 2018).

Kim additionally reiterates that the nuclear program is a critical piece of the North Korean effort towards the *juche* pillars of national self-defense and protection of sovereignty. His rhetoric regarding the DPRK’s nuclear capacity draws upon the *juche* worldview of a North Korea struggling to maintain its independence under constant attack from the rest of the world (Jong-un January 2018).

### *Juche* at the Societal Level

It is also important to consider *juche*’s presence at the societal level. During the Arduous March, *juche* established that it can mitigate potential domestic unrest. Its presence or absence could therefore augment our understanding of the stability of North Korean society and potential openings for engagement. North Korean defectors at the North Korea Strategy Center

stated that they perceived a breakdown in *juche*'s legitimacy, which has caused the regime to increase levels of oppression to maintain societal control (SAIS Group Meeting, Group of Defectors, Seoul, 24 January 2018). Another defector explained that the perception of *juche* breaks down along the generational divide: it remains salient for the older generation that grew up with it and are nostalgic for the past. The younger generation, however, feels no strong connection to the ideology. In fact, this defector posited that the North Korean youth are largely curious to learn more about and connect with the outside world. Many additionally oppose the nuclear program, as they perceive it to be the reason why they are unable to access the international community (SAIS Group Meeting with Sungju Lee, Seoul, 23 January 2018). These points are anecdotal and may not represent starkly different realities between those living in Pyongyang and those in rural areas. However, they do indicate that *juche*'s importance is preserved among portions of the population, although this may soon begin to diminish with generational shifts and greater access to information.

### *Juche*'s Changing Influence

Given the above observations, it appears that ideology is not as rigid a policy driver under the Kim Jong-un regime as it was under his grandfather. As such, we cannot use it as a sole predictor of DPRK policy. It is clear, however, that the ideology's central institutions remain salient in the DPRK today, as the government continues to seek legitimacy for its policies by invoking *juche*. It is therefore still important that international policymakers evaluate their positions towards the DPRK through the lens of *juche*, so as to improve their effectiveness.

However, this may change in the future as social and political conditions continue to shift over time. The current government seems to use an increasingly flexible *juche* as a justifying label for its policies, even as its policies slowly move away from *juche*'s original interpretation. This necessity of relying on *juche* for political legitimacy may also deteriorate over time as the younger generation of North Koreans increasingly feel less connected to its ideals. In fact, a significant shift in perception as demographics change could ultimately find the population antipathetic to *juche* if they believe it is the source of their woes. In this case, regime control may actually be diminished by *juche*. Therefore, shifts such as the ones listed above may change the relevance of *juche* when considering foreign policy towards the DPRK.

### **Analyzing Policy Through *Juche***

Using the above examination of the *juche* ideology in the DPRK, we can consider how various policies of the US, ROK, and international community are likely perceived by the Kim regime and its people.

### Economic Sanctions

The UN has passed nine separate resolutions condemning the DPRK's nuclear activities and imposing financial and economic sanctions upon it. Countries, like the US, that call for these sanctions hold the belief that they will cripple the North Korean economy, placing domestic

political pressure on the regime and minimizing its ability to move its nuclear program forward as rapidly. It additionally punishes the target country by revoking its ability to engage in the international economy.

If we view the impact of sanctions through the lens of the North Korean ideology, we see that their perception may be different than these countries would anticipate. First, sanctions have fed into and strengthened the *juche* concept of a hostile world attempting to bring Korea under its control. The DPRK has taken sanctions as an attack on its independence and self-defense. This perception has therefore strengthened the regime's resolve to continue its nuclear program, as it believes that this program provides the only way to demonstrate its strength and guarantee its self-defense through deterrence. Furthermore, it feeds into the regime's messaging to its citizens, reinforcing their antipathy towards the outside world.

Second, the imposition of sanctions makes the statement that the targeted country could reintegrate into the international economy if it stopped its negative behavior. As *juche* clearly establishes, however, the DPRK does not seek economic integration with the rest of the world. While the country would certainly support the export of North Korean manufactured goods, it ultimately seeks a self-sustaining economy. The only significant exception to this has been the import of various energy sources in order to sustain its industry. Additionally, although the regime repeatedly labels economic sanctions as an attack on its sovereignty, it is likely aware that the removal of the sanctions regime could pose a different challenge. Sanctions have isolated the DPRK from much of the rest of the world, which has afforded the regime a greater ability to control the information that enters the country. An increase in trade may, therefore, expose North Korean citizens to significantly higher levels of information and ideas, which the regime would perceive as a potential threat to its own authority and the *juche* ideals.

Finally, the idea that sanctions will hurt the economy to an extent that will mobilize the domestic population to challenge the government is questionable in the case of North Korea. As demonstrated by the Arduous March in the 1990s, even a famine caused by the government's economic policies was not enough to cause domestic political uprisings. It is clear that sanctions are having a significant impact on the DPRK's economy, particularly as Kim Jong-un acknowledged difficult economic conditions in his 2018 New Year's speech. North Korean defectors additionally mentioned in our meetings that many of those in rural areas live in poverty and feel growing resentment towards the government (SAIS Group Meeting, Sungju Lee, Seoul, 23 January 2018). However, North Koreans have largely responded, not by calling for wider change, but by expanding the black markets, which are free of sanctions and increasingly supported by the government. While it is certain that oppression is one of the reasons that more civilians have not protested the DPRK's current policies, the Arduous March provides a similar example of a time when North Koreans took it upon themselves to ameliorate their conditions. The likelihood of this reaction today is enhanced by the perception among some that, in the case of sanctions, it is the international community that is to blame for the deterioration of their living conditions, as opposed to their own government.

### Chinese Influence

The US, among others, has also placed significant emphasis on China's continuing relationship with the DPRK. It is clear that China is currently the DPRK's closest ally, both politically and economically, as China constitutes more than 90% of the DPRK's total trade volume. China is therefore the sole country that could singlehandedly cause the rapid decline of the DPRK's economy (similarly to the impact that the USSR had on the DPRK's economy before the Arduous March) by cutting off all fuel exports. With this in mind, the US has placed increasing pressure on China to use its economic relationship to force the DPRK to stop all progress towards its nuclear program. While it is true that China has a unique ability to impact conditions in the DPRK, my examination of *juche* and its history demonstrates that the DPRK is not as susceptible to Chinese influence as the international community may believe.

North Koreans continue to maintain a sense of distrust towards China because of their negative experiences in the 1930s, during the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, and during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. They additionally remain wary of any Chinese efforts to dictate the DPRK's practices or positions. As a result, Chinese demands are perceived by the DPRK as hostile moves to again impose upon its sovereignty and independence. Even though a Chinese threat to end all exports to the DPRK would seriously endanger the DPRK's economy, it is therefore still unlikely to acquiesce.

### Unification of the Korean Peninsula

The potential for the reunification of North and South Korea continues to be a stated goal of both the DPRK and ROK governments. The two shared a common history until the division of 1945 and many of their citizens still have familial ties to each other. This ultimate goal is therefore often included as a longer-term incentive for both Koreas to negotiate with each other. Given this potential carrot, it is useful to consider how *juche* can help or hamper efforts to bring about a peaceful reunification of the Peninsula.

At the governmental level, the application of *juche* across the Koreas would pose significant challenges. The ROK has widely embraced a capitalist economic system and has close ties with many of the Western powers who are perceived to threaten the DPRK. The *juche* ideology and practicalities, with its Marxist-Leninist frame and bipolar worldview, would stand in stark contradiction to much of the ROK's existing institutions. This contrast demonstrates what would likely be the largest obstacle to the eventual reunification of the two Koreas: the incorporation of a socialist and a capitalist state into one.

The *juche* ideology may instead be more helpful at the societal level. Despite their growing differences, both sides maintain their commitment to eventual reunification and many South Korean citizens maintain a strong sense of Korean nationalism. While *juche* extends beyond the initial concept of Korean nationalism, this emphasis on their shared heritage and pride could serve as a powerful tool to bring the two populations together. South Koreans would likely still be unreceptive to shifting towards a *juche* economic system, but the ultimate

guiding ideal of the preservation of Korean heritage and practices appeals strongly to both sides.

## **Recommendations**

### To the United States

- **Remove sanctions that are not targeted at DPRK officials and refrain from imposing more sanctions.** This simply escalates the regime's perceived threat level, feeds into their narrative, and is unlikely to engender significant change in regime policies.
- **Recalibrate the types of demands made upon China,** with the understanding that the DPRK will be resistant to any dictates and threats from the Chinese.
- **Stop threatening the DPRK in political statements.** Again, this escalates the perceived threat level in the DPRK and encourages the regime to place greater emphasis on its nuclear program.

### To the Republic of Korea

- **Develop a trilateral economic agreement with Russia and China, with the ultimate goal of incorporating the DPRK.** Establishing the framework for such engagement will demonstrate to the DPRK that its three closest economic partners are willing and able to work together to build a regional economic coalition that is readily available for it to join. Such an agreement would likely act as a stronger incentive for the DPRK than the concept of total integration into the international community.
- **Encourage the spread of greater information in the DPRK.** The younger generation of North Koreans have shown an increased openness to the rest of the world and to questioning the government's policies. While it is unlikely that this will cause a significant uprising, this shift in perceptions can, over time, place more pressure on the government to change its stance towards the ROK and international community.
- **Pursue policies that increase cross-Korean engagement at the local level.** While North and South Korea grow increasingly apart, the social importance placed on Korean nationalism and reunification can be a powerful tool to encourage both populations to work together. Additionally, greater inter-Korean engagement can reduce the threat that the DPRK perceives it may face from a US-aligned ROK.

## Analyzing Regime Stability Under Kim Jong-un

Ellexis A. Chapman

Embassies operating in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had many continued requests from Kim Jong-un's regime to change the Wifi password every week (SAIS Group Meeting with Mr. Lee Song Ju, Seoul, 23 January 2018). A report on a South Korean website showed property demand was higher around embassies in North Korea's capital of Pyongyang and were told by officials that the wireless signals were affecting their surroundings (Evans 2014). The ability of the North Korean populace to use unencrypted Wifi and the struggle for the regime to control access to outside information amidst growing demand illustrates the changing nature of North Korea. While the Kim regime's authoritarian control may be dissolving, it still has many factors that ensure its continued resilience from internal shocks and outside pressure for the foreseeable future.

First, this chapter will begin by looking at the elements that legitimize the regime and allow it to remain in power. Second, it will address the likely ways in which the regime could collapse, followed by the consequences to the North Korean state, surrounding region, and global system. Thirdly, it will examine the factors that contribute to regime stability and continued rule. Then, it explores the notion that denuclearization and continued regime stability are two mutually exclusive ideas that the international system is trying to pursue. Finally, it will provide policy recommendations for the Republic of Korea (ROK), the United States (US), and China.

### **Pillars of the Regime**

North Korea's Kim dynasty relies on the pillars of *Juche* ideology (see chapter by Noar); an elite core in Pyongyang; giving extra privileges to the security services and military; and its nuclear program as a deterrent to outside powers while simultaneously enhancing DPRK international and domestic prestige (see chapter by Arias). The pillars are integral to regime survival, and, if knocked out, internal collapse becomes increasingly more likely. External actors targeting these pillars can cause severe instability and potentially cause the state to fail. Briefly outlining these core principles is necessary to understanding the regime, with its strengths and vulnerabilities, inside the DPRK and to outside actors as well as providing specific framing to analyze the possibility of a collapse.

*Juche* ideology was created by the Supreme Leader, Kim Il-sung, and depends on "self-reliance" which stems from the elite class who fought against Japanese imperialism in 1931-1945 (Byman and Lind 2010, 49, 52). The heroism by the first leader of the DPRK created national legitimacy in denouncing foreign enemies and lent credibility to harsh policies. Byman and Lind state "Ideology provides a way of understanding the world and model for future action" (Byman and Lind 2010, 49). As a result of *Juche* ideology, the regime was able

to cultivate authoritarian control that uses brute force, restrictive social policies, information control, and high dependence on the government to meet basic needs.

The elite core in Pyongyang, depending on what factors are used, is comprised of somewhere between 200 and 5,000 people, which the regime relies on for political stability in exchange for luxury private goods and political or economic opportunity (Byman and Lind 2010, 59-60). Co-opting elites protects against a *coup d'état* and ensures that the regime stays in power as long as they are reaping the benefits. Unfortunately, the benefits for elites come at the expense of the rest of the North Korean citizens, a population of around 25 million people (Albert 2018). The Kim regime has crafted meticulous social policies aimed at controlling the populace. A complex social classification system, *songbun*, determines where you live, study, work, and even political or military opportunities. This system is all based on perceived loyalty of your family to the regime (Robertson 2016). Disloyalty to the regime is a severe offense and punishment includes being sent to political prison camps, beatings, execution, and additional hardship. The DPRK has a “three generations” policy that punishes a disloyal individual’s entire family (Byman and Lind 2010, 58).

By providing the bulk of services to security forces and the military, the Kim regime gives them legitimacy and ensures loyalty, much like the elite class in Pyongyang. Political power is held within the military and through reforms such as the “military first” policy. The regime regards the military as crucial to their idea of socialism and the face of revolution (Byman and Lind 2010, 63). With 1.2 million active duty personnel and 7.7 million reservists, the DPRK ranks among one of the largest armies in the world (Bennett and Lind 2011, 85). By elevating the military, the Kim regime believes it can thwart outside hostile actors, which guarantees its survival and elicits tight control for domestic policies. It is estimated that 25 percent of GDP is spent on the military (Albert 2018), roughly \$123.2 billion (The World Bank 2016), which makes it the most significant burden for the national economy. The DPRK government is now having difficulty feeding its soldiers and providing health services amidst sanctions (McCurry 2017). This suggests that a vital pillar of the regime is beginning to deteriorate and that it is likely that unforeseen complications within North Korea will emerge.

The Kim dynasty relies on nuclear weapons to deter outside threats, namely the United States, to legitimize their control and give credence to their prestige in the international global system. To guarantee power in politics, security, and prestige, the nuclear weapon was the ultimate answer. Since the Korean War when the North and South were divided along ideological lines with the help of external supporters, the ROK has surpassed the DPRK in almost every aspect of the economy, development, trade, and is even superior in conventional military capabilities (Byman and Lind 2010, 63). The nuclear weapons program, something the ROK does not have, heightens the DPRK’s status when it comes to competition with the South. Now integral to national security policy, nuclear weapons give the regime continued stability, despite facing hardships from within North Korea and imposed from the outside by its adversaries.

### **Internally Driven Regime Collapse**

There are many instances in which authoritarian regimes have fallen. When analyzing factors that could drive regime change in North Korea, it is important to look at both internal and external circumstances. The eroding foundational principles of power for Kim Jong-un could cause the government to lose control and collapse; social repression and new information could account for an uprising; Kim Jong-un's assassination or death from natural causes without a successor may drive civil conflict in an attempt to gain power; and economic difficulties lead to a weakening military that may produce further insecurities. Each of these internal challenges corrodes the national ideology and delegitimizes new government policies. Alternatively, many prominent outside actors may find a need to push for regime change by imposing harsh sanctions, military strikes, or attempted assassination of the DPRK president. It is essential to understand both internally and externally driven types of regimes changes because they change the context of a collapse, thereby potentially shifting or creating different consequences for actors involved.

### Economic Difficulties and Illicit Finance

North Korea's centrally planned economy is one of the least open economies in the world. The DPRK experienced severe economic turmoil in the 1990s following mismanagement and resource allocation (Heritage Foundation 2018). It is estimated that per capita GDP declined between 35 and 75 percent of pre-1990s amount, which had severe ramifications for the majority of the population (Bennett 2013, 17-18). Unemployment and famine led to deaths numbering in the several thousand to several million during this period (Bennett 2013, 17). During the early 2000s, shortages of food and other goods forced the government to ease control of the economy, which shifted activities to the market. After trying to revert to a tightly controlled state-planned economy was met with a harsh popular backlash by the elite, the regime was compelled to continue loosening control to cover financial needs and boost economic growth or risk losing power (Bennett 2013, 26-28). These economic shocks strained totalitarian control, and many analysts estimated the country was on the verge of collapse. However, North Korea has persisted. According to Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index, today North Korea is ranked in the bottom 20 percent of all countries for stability (Fragile States Index 2017). With economic decline and external intervention ranked amongst the highest indicators, the DPRK's ranking is due to high public expenditure on its nuclear weapons program and other military procurement at the expense of meeting the population's needs.

Pumping money into ballistic missile tests, such as the Hwasong-14 and 15, has led to outside actors imposing harsher sanctions and deteriorating terms of trade on North Korea to apply pressure to an already struggling economy. It is estimated that North Korea's economy has a \$1,360 per capita GDP, which is dismal compared to its neighbors in the south. Exports rely heavily, over 50 percent, on natural resources which are now not bringing in money because of strained trade terms. Further, North Korea is unwilling to reform to increase its

creditworthiness, thereby not allowing it to borrow internationally, especially since it defaulted on loans in the 1980s (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018). The UN Security Council has imposed some of the most stringent sanctions yet on the DPRK, cutting off vital resources and sources of revenue in hopes of obtaining a freeze on missile testing and getting North Korea to the negotiating table. These sanctions seek to cut off one-third of total exports from the DPRK, around \$1 billion, and to target their largest sectors of textiles and coal (Tamkin and Gramer 2017). The challenges in the state planned economy have allowed bribery between merchants and the security services to flourish. The government has sought alternative illicit finance activities to cover committed expenditures and finance investments in capital infrastructure, including its nuclear weapons program (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018).

Despite economic difficulties, illicit financing and an increasingly flourishing black market are the main drivers of North Korea's persistent 1 to 5 percent economic growth per year (M.F. 2017). The black market is now broadly present and accounts for about 40 percent of legitimate exports from the DPRK (Byman and Lind 2010, 64). The Kim regime earns revenue from trafficking narcotics and products made from endangered species, counterfeit medicine and foreign currency, arms exports (primarily missile technology sales to the Middle East), and even earns in excess of \$1 billion annually by forcing laborers abroad (Byman and Lind 2010, 63; M.F. 2017). A survey in North Korea society states that over 70 percent of respondents said that half or more of their income comes from private business dealings (Bennett 2013, 40; also see Harden 2010, 11). Decreasing control of the economy pulls power from the regime and puts faith on the market, causing fracturing of the social contract and decreasing government reliance. Further dependence on black markets and illicit activities causes uncertainty and insecurity for Kim Jong-un. The widening social cleavage between citizens and the leadership combined with economic vulnerabilities could cause the regime to lose control and collapse.

#### Weakening Control on Citizens and Military

Increased information flooding into North Korea and reliance on the black market for basic survival needs have weakened the regime's control on both the citizens and military soldiers. Information is finding its way into North Korea now more than ever before. Following the severe famine, information control has been impaired, as those controlling the border and trains are taking bribes for funds and food (Byman and Lind 2010, 55). It was found that almost half of citizens can now access foreign news and entertainment. Because of a corrupt system, people are less worried about being caught as the crime can be settled with a bribe. Even the military has been so corrupted by outside information that the regime authorized the civilian police to investigate corrupt personnel in the military (Bennett 2013, 37-39). Defectors from North Korea have shared insight about citizens seeing frequent food shortages, the failure of Kim Jong-un to provide public services, and overall dissatisfaction as a result of repression, and

they are starting to blame the regime, and not outside foreigners, for causing these instabilities (SAIS Group Meeting with North Korea defectors, Seoul, 24 January 2018).

In addition to freer access to information, news reports indicate that the military is facing shortages of food, causing soldiers to suffer from malnutrition and scorn government control in exchange for rations (McCurry 2017). A pinnacle of the regime, supporting military and security services, is starting to deteriorate. The military is primarily made up of those in the younger generation, where nuclear weapons are seen as prohibiting access to markets and struggles from restrictions imposed on them by foreign countries. Sanctions on the DPRK as a result of missile testing target the military supply line to cripple the army (M.F. 2017). Because of these severe hardships, if there ever were a conflict within North Korea, it would be hard to sustain for Kim Jong-un if loyalty to the regime by the young population continues to diminish. Although the size of North Korea's military is impressive, outdated weaponry and weakening health for military personnel make it unprepared to counter a regime attack. As the DPRK leadership is losing control of its ordinary citizens and security forces due to insufficient provisions, a rise in foreign information showing life outside North Korea and corruption inside North Korea risks creating internal dissatisfaction that could potentially lead to political change or even to revolution. If that happened, it would most likely start in the military. Defectors from North Korea consistently emphasized that an information campaign directed to the citizens of North Korea would be far more effective in bringing about change in the regime than the current military and economic "maximum pressure" (SAIS Group Meeting with North Korea defectors, Seoul, 24 January 2018).

### Internal Power Struggle

Lastly, although extreme authoritarian measures are integral to the Kim dynasty, Kim Jong-un has been competing with elites for control. Diverting some ruling policies from his father has estranged elites as Kim Jong-un has excluded them from the governing coalitions (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018). The two starkly different societies, those within Pyongyang and those outside of it, live very different lives, as those within the city depend more on the government than those in rural areas who are left to starve. As the government is struggling to continue providing basic needs to elites that are used to being taken care of, competition for power has the potential to emerge. Bruce W. Bennett states "The cessation of government functions is worse than the mere failure of a particular political party or regime. In the resulting power vacuum, various factions may vie with one another to take control..." (Bennett 2013, 14). Kim Jong-un has been the leader of the DPRK since 2011, but it has been suggested he lacks cultural charisma necessary to put him in the same mythical or revolutionary category as his father and grandfather. The heroism in his family's legacy is critical for cultivating the perception of power and to acceptance by the elite. Lack of mythical status for Kim Jong-un challenges the *Juche* ideology and undermines new policies for government control.

The political system is a one-man/one-party system that relies on the leadership. Members of the Korean National Diplomatic Academy suggested that if the leadership changes, the system inevitably changes, which creates urgency and severe insecurity (SAIS Group Meeting, Seoul, 22 January 2018). Currently, it is unclear who would replace Kim Jong-un if he should no longer be able to rule. There have been several reports of assassination attempts against Kim Jong-un, one report alluding that the attempt came from within military ranks (Bennett 2013, 46). Because the Kim family's legacy is so deeply entrenched in society, Adam Rawnsley (2017) argues that it "bodes poorly for the country's ability to quickly erect a better society from the ashes of any future conflict... Removing the last Kim - as catastrophically bloody as it would be - might be relatively easy compared with governing the chaotic kingdom left behind." The regime is losing control of its ability to provide basic needs to historically prestigious elites, and power vacuums have emerged leaving the regime to grasp at control. Without an identified successor to the throne, should something happen to the Supreme Leader, North Korea could be thrust into anarchy, which could cause the country to collapse generating serious consequences in the DPRK and throughout the region.

### **Externally Driven Regime Change**

With advancement in missile and nuclear technology, the International Crisis Group asserts, "the risk of catastrophic war on the Korean peninsula is higher than any time in recent history" (N° 294 2018). A strategy of "maximum pressure" has been adopted by the US, ROK, and Japan to counter North Korea's threatening posture. New UN sanctions also rely on China to target the North Korean regime. All the while, the international system remains firm on total denuclearization of the peninsula. The 2017 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) testing of Hwasong-15 indicated that with further developments North Korea could potentially launch an attack on any part of the US. This means that the DPRK could dictate the terms of conflict on the peninsula while forcing the US into concessions. The Trump administration has oscillating strategies, hinting at "fire and fury" and also expressing a desire to talk. The idea that the US would contemplate pre-emptive action has shifted perceptions on all sides. This increases the chance that fear and misinterpretation could spark a war (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018).

Robert Pape writes, "External pressure is more likely to enhance the nationalist legitimacy of rulers rather than to undermine it" (Byman and Lind 2010, 33). By the US threatening to strike North Korea, it is strengthening their narrative of victimization. However, despite potential backlash, the US has hinted at several options including the "bloody nose" scenario which would allow the US military a limited and targeted strike aimed at nuclear weapon development test sites or facilities. Other US officials have suggested action close to a full-scale attack targeting missile development to erode government confidence without retaliation (International Crisis Group N° 293 and N° 294 2018). Because of the regime's reliance on nuclear capability to remain in control domestically, it is likely the Kim regime would retaliate in some way. A US invasion of North Korea is an existential threat to power.

Seeing no other option, Kim Jong-un may decide to strike back, which would undoubtedly cause unmanageable escalation and inevitable collapse of the regime and state.

Although the ROK sees reunification of the Korean peninsula as a key objective for their state, they also understand the severe consequences of instability right on their border that could result from pursuing unification. Nevertheless, for decades, the ROK has been under heightened threat from North Korea after the Korean War ended in 1953 with an armistice, but no formal peace agreement. Sixty-five years later, the conflict is still very much active. Profound mistrust on both sides, incidents along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the North and South, underground tunnel infiltrations, and many military engagements in the air and sea, have caused negotiations to collapse. Understanding the instability that could result in the ROK as an outcome of conflict, the ROK has emphasized “policy change” instead of “regime change” in the North. Close ties within the ROK-US alliance have at times signaled to the North that this actually means regime change. Because of this perception, tensions could escalate on either side that could cause a collapse of the regime. Furthermore, if the US decides to pursue a policy of regime change, the ROK may be forced to pick a side, which will likely be that of its US ally.

It is meaningful to note that Japan, China, and Russia also have large stakes in regime change. Although there is a Japan-ROK-US alliance, historical trauma from the Japanese occupation on the Korean Peninsula makes the alliance very complicated. Japan is not interested in instability in North Korea, but it is unclear what their actions would be should the US and ROK decide to pursue regime change. For China and Russia, regime collapse is not in their interest, and having a nuclear North Korea helps them achieve their own policy objective of keeping the US off their doorstep. Although they worry about the volatility of nuclear weapons, the tension it is creating in the region and the limitations it is imposing on them for increased cooperation with the DPRK, pursuing regime change would be counterproductive to their goals. Both China and Russia are ambivalent about DPRK nuclear weapons, seeing them as a dangerous provocation in some ways but also necessary for the moment to deter the US and ROK invasion of the North. China also does not want a unified peninsula under ROK leading the US to be against their border.

### **Consequences for DPRK**

Due to disintegration of the pillars of the regime, as well as both internally and externally driven factors of regime change, it is not inconceivable to see the possibility of a collapse of the government or the state as a whole. Should this occur, the 25 million citizens in the DPRK would suffer the harshest consequences. Bennett highlights the resulting instability in North Korea, first outlining the failure of government functions and military leaders creating factions to cover the existing power void. Failure of government functions would potentially cause several million people to die of starvation and severe health consequences due to lack of access to medical care and supplies (Bennett 2013, xviii). These factions would seek to gain control of the civilian population and pursue options to take over weaker factions, thus creating violent

volatility. Dissonance because of disloyalty to faction leaders may lead to uprisings, and personal security will largely deteriorate. Factional leaders may use brutal force to eliminate the opposition, and black market activities may undermine control. Human rights violations would inflate as formerly oppressed people seek revenge or security forces kill those they have abused. Over 200,000 political prisoners interned in camps would be at extreme risk of extermination (Bennett 2013, 59-67).

A severe humanitarian crisis would trigger mass starvation, malnutrition, and conflict, causing a large migration of refugees to nearby countries. The DMZ is filled with landmines making crossing the border into ROK very dangerous. The ROK projects at least 3 million refugees would flee into their state, but that is significantly smaller than those that would flee north into China and Russia. It is difficult to estimate the number of refugees that would flow into these countries given limited information, but rough projections suggest at least twice as many that would flow into ROK—6 to 7 million (Coggins 2017).

Depending on how the collapse occurs, if the regime suspects the beginning of the end, they may initiate a conflict with the ROK or US to divert attention from regime instability (Bennett 2013, 60). By responding to foreign threats, the Kim leadership might invade the South, prompting the ROK and US to respond in turn by completely invading the North, whose forces, although numerous, are not capable of withstanding the invasion. It is estimated that within the first day of fighting there would be 30,000-300,000 casualties, which would significantly increase should the DPRK decide to use its atomic, biological, or chemical weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) (Terry, Pak, and Klinger 2018). This leads into the last consequence of WMDs likely being used if the regime feared that it was losing control. Instability in North Korea could cause WMDs to be stolen and sold on the black market to fund factions competing for power or used against the populace. With the North Korean government already making sales of WMDs to Iran and Syria, there would be nothing stopping it from selling to other authoritarian regimes or terrorist organizations (Bennett 2013, 63). Further, casualties could compound if China decided to intervene on behalf of the DPRK.

### **Consequences for External Actors**

Implications for a North Korean collapse would reach far beyond the ROK, US, and China affecting the entire global system. However, for the sake of brevity in this analysis, I will briefly cover the most severe consequences to these three largest outside actors. This does not discount the negative externalities imposed on additional countries like Japan, Russia, and others, but seeking to convey the gravity of consequences outside of the DPRK as a result of collapse does not require exploring every facet.

#### Consequences for ROK

The ROK's capital, Seoul, is home to over 25 million citizens which is only 32 miles (50 km) away from the border with North Korea. In case of a collapse, Seoul would be vulnerable to military threats, as would the rest of South Korea. Consequences for the ROK would include:

casualties of war to military personnel and civilians; economic loss; infrastructure damage; compromise of technology from cyber-attacks, threatening businesses and transportation; a flood of refugees that would now require resources; and spillover of illicit activity tied to North Korea's black market economy (Bennet 2013, 68-77).

South Korea is ranked as the 12th largest economy in the world and would suffer a large economic decline as a result of a regime collapse in the North (Terry, Pak, and Klinger 2018). Within the first year of conflict, it is predicted that the ROK would lose 10 to 20 percent of GDP due to military mobilization. Should the DPRK invade, physical damage is assessed to increase economic loss to 50 percent of GDP, thereby devastating the economy. These losses would likely result if only conventional weapons were used, but, should WMDs enter the scene, the losses would be overwhelming. WMDs would more than double casualties from conventional fighting in Seoul alone. Bennett further describes a bleak scene: "Just a single North Korean nuclear weapon detonated in Seoul with a ten kiloton yield could cause 200,000 or so fatalities, a similar number of serious injuries, and a financial cost of some \$1.5 trillion" (2013, 69-70). As of September 2017, the seismological observatory NORSAR has detected underground nuclear testing in North Korea and estimates its largest explosive yield to be at 120 kilotons TNT (over 260 million pounds worth of TNT), far greater than the prior estimate that the DPRK may use a ten kiloton bomb. To show in comparison, the explosive yield of "little boy," the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, had a yield of about 15 kilotons TNT (Lycke 2017). Furthermore, because of instability and economic loss in ROK, foreign investments in ROK markets will be withdrawn. ROK goods could be contaminated by DPRK WMDs leaving ROK goods stigmatized and the rest of the world unwilling to buy them (Bennett 2013, 72). The ROK would be dealing with these ramifications for years if not decades.

### Consequences for the US

In the event of a North Korean collapse, the US's largest threat comes from a potential ICBM attack, assuming that the DPRK's missile technology successfully advances with the outfitting of a nuclear warhead. Should DPRK use ICBMs to directly target the US, the casualties would be immeasurable. Furthermore, various factions could obtain control of these weapons directly, threatening the region and the United States, or selling the weapons (or fissile material) to outside groups causing more future risk to US national security around the globe. The US would also have to decide to intervene on behalf of ROK and Japan and consider whether that policy would include forced unification under South Korean control. This would undoubtedly affect the 230,000 US civilian and military citizens living in South Korea (Kilpatrick 2017).

The economic costs for stabilizing North Korea project at best \$1 trillion, reaching all the way to \$3 trillion, in which the US would be expected to provide the majority. This would significantly increase US federal debt at the expense of other public expenditures (Feffer 2017). Should China enter into the fight against the US, the challenge on the peninsula "would

supersede anything they [the US] have faced over the past decade and a half in South Asia or the Middle East” (International Crisis Group N° 294 2018). Also, China or Russia could use this opportunity while the US is distracted to advance other strategic interests, such as Taiwan and the South China Sea, further complicating US security and upsetting regional stability. Each of these scenarios and subsequent decisions and actions will impose political cost: Japan and ROK alliances could crumble; US relationship with China could deteriorate; and public approval by domestic constituents could influence future policies (and credibility) for the United States.

### Consequences for China

During and after a collapse in the DPRK, China would assuredly face a massive burden due to refugee inflows from North Korea, on top of the already burdening refugee numbers currently flooding across its border. There is a possibility that China may already be building refugee camps along the border in case of a regime collapse (Phillips 2017). However, the costs of taking care of those refugees and securing the border have not been estimated.

China receives 10 percent of its intermediate goods from South Korea, as well as boasting China’s 4<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner, indicating that a collapse in the North would severely disrupt regional supply chains and affect global markets (Fensom 2017). Since 2000, bilateral trade between China and DPRK has increased tenfold peaking at \$6.86 billion, although trade is now hampered by sanctions (Albert 2018). A collapse would disrupt China’s economic priorities and national interests. China’s relationship with Pyongyang is in large part to create a buffer between Beijing and US forces. With a regime collapse, tensions with the US could escalate into the US and Chinese troops clashing, thereby exacerbating consequences for China (see chapter by Yan).

### **Regime Control for the Foreseeable Future**

Despite all the economic challenges for North Korea and what seems to be a loosening control of the populace, the Kim regime is unlikely to fall soon unless hostilities between Kim Jong-un and President Donald Trump escalate and misinterpretation leads to a strike of military force on either side; or Kim Jong-un suddenly passes away without appointing a successor. While it has been predicted for decades that the Kim regime would collapse, it hasn’t. There is continued resilience in response to severe domestic challenges, including devastating famine, and outside pressure. If there were a time that the regime was the most vulnerable, it would have been in 2011 when Kim Jong-un took over leadership from his father, Kim Jong-il. Unsure of new leadership, the military and elites had the opportunity to compete in a power struggle. An inexperienced Kim Jong-un introduced new government policies relating to economic growth and advancing North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Meanwhile, he shifted Pyongyang’s elites by creating different coalitions and continued brutal tactics to eliminate opposition. It is also the regime’s reliance on the central pillars previously discussed

that has allowed it to thrive. Despite declining in control, the regime still has a tight grip on its citizens by using brute force, continuing restrictive social policies, and information control.

Further advancements in Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program has only lent more credibility to the regime and its narrative and has strengthened domestic support. The advancements in testing its largest nuclear bomb and ICBM to date have shown the regime's determination to be recognized on the international system and taken seriously at the negotiation table. WMDs and outside pressure as a result of them have only strengthened the regime narrative and legitimized continued policies for advancements. The Kim family has sunk so much cost into nuclear security that there is no benefit to outweigh its value. Denuclearizing will cause the regime to collapse, as all legitimacy for power will be taken away. Even if Kim Jong-un obtained security guarantees through negotiations, which is unspecified, the image of power given to him and the regime by nuclear weapons might become insecure and produce instability. Having regime stability and denuclearizing North Korea are two mutually exclusive ideas. However, the largest factor in continued stability for the regime has been the ties to the black market.

Pyongyang boasted the largest economic growth in 17 years in 2016 (M.F. 2017). Despite tough sanctions that target core sectors, large government revenues come from illicit financial activities that help it support public services and its coveted nuclear weapons. Now that the population is relying heavily on these black markets, shocks to North Korea's system, like severe famine, will not affect the country as much as it has in the past because citizens can use markets to supplement what the government can no longer provide. Illicit market activities are increasingly connecting the DPRK to its neighbors, particularly China, and opening up society to more free flow of information than any time in the past (see chapter by Yan). The smuggling of goods from outside may also render sanctions ineffective. The private sector has taken over in these underground markets. As sanctions target large public sector support, reliance on black markets from government and citizens will only increase. Sanctions take a long time to work, and even then the effects are limited (see chapters by Gay and Sayre).

Finally, a regime collapse would cause devastating consequences that would impose high human and financial costs for all those involved. A war on the Korean peninsula is estimated to knock off at least half a percentage point of world GDP, amounting to \$350 billion (International Crisis Group N° 294 2018). Because of the severe consequences of collapse, the states that would suffer the most are the ones invested in keeping it together. Instead, while external actors want to impose pressure on the regime, most agree that regime change is not in their strategic interests. In reality, for China and Russia, stability in North Korea is paramount to their objectives of ensuring that the US does not assert further control in the region. Imposing strict sanctions will never cause Pyongyang to crumble because these two countries alone will not allow it. Since the US has been leaning on China to strengthen pressure against DPRK, Russia has quietly helped boost economic growth. Fearing external pressures for regime change, Russia has more than doubled its bilateral trade in 2017 to \$31.4 million, particularly due to oil product exports, and it has disregarded a US-led effort to repatriate tens of thousands

of North Korean workers (Osborn 2017). Remittances from these laborers help the Kim regime meet expenditures, especially for its nuclear program.

## **Recommendations**

### To the Republic of Korea

- **Formulate contingency plans in the event of regime collapse.** As the ROK will be the second largest to suffer the consequences of regime collapse, it is imperative that the ROK has contingency plans. Effective contingency plans require updated operational methods of executing and agreed upon rules of engagement for numerous likely scenarios.
- **Discuss contingency plans with alliance and China.** Due to overlapping strategic objectives and diverging opinions surrounding the changing Operational Control of US and ROK military forces, the US and ROK governments need to regularly meet and update contingency plans, while also trying to formulate a unified strategy in dealing with a threatening North Korea (see chapter by Kagawa). Because China and the ROK will bear the brunt of the spillover in the event of a collapse, the ROK should also discuss contingency operations with China to coordinate what each will do in the event of collapse to prevent escalating conflict between themselves (see chapter by Yan).
- **Outline policy options for economic cooperation with North Korea.** A key objective of the ROK's unification policy is economic cooperation, yet it is unwilling to entertain the idea unless the DPRK denuclearizes. Given that denuclearization would most likely cause regime collapse and the ROK does not want military escalation, it is worth at least outlining what economic cooperation would look like with a nuclearized North Korea.

### To the United States

- **Create contingency plans in the event of a regime collapse.** The US should develop operational strategies and rules of engagement that can quickly be enacted. Discussing those plans with allies in the region and China will eliminate further escalation of violence in such an event and will make a UN mandate pass through the Security Council much quicker (see chapter by Yan). Working with countries surrounding the DPRK to secure WMDs, weapons-grade fuel, and missile technology will be paramount for global security.
- **Design long-term strategies for engaging North Korea that will live past an administration.** One of the most significant hindrances to engagements with the DPRK is that politicians design them in an effort to see outcomes in four years. Engagement is a long process, and it provides no incentive to the Kim regime to remain an active participant if the US reneges on credible commitments years later.
- **Conduct analysis on integrating North Korea into the international system.** Unless conflict erupts on the Korean Peninsula, the DPRK will most likely remain a

nuclearized state. If the international system is not willing to accept a nuclearized North Korea and also not willing to accept a collapsed state, then the global system needs to re-evaluate what its underlying interests are and reexamine its policies toward a threatening state. Providing an alternative look at integrating North Korea into the world may provide an incentive for the Kim regime to impose safeguards on its nuclear program or freeze current development. Keeping nuclear weapons allows the regime a face-saving mechanism for domestic constituents, and a freeze on development provides some assurance to the global system. The US has learned to live with nuclearized adversaries in the past, and maybe it is time to consider what that could look like for the future. Differentiating between US positions and US interests would be paramount to this exercise.

#### To China

- **Develop contingency plans in the event of a regime collapse.** China should continue creating and updating contingency plans. With different ways in which the regime could fall, China's national interests may be at risk from spillover, a confrontation with the US, and dangers from unsecured WMDs and associated products. It is critical to formulate a reaction plan and to discuss rules of engagement with the US-ROK-Japan alliance in such an event (see chapter by Yan).



## **Evolutions in Economic Considerations in the North Korean Conflict**

James Sayre

The increasingly confrontational postures of both North Korea (DPRK) and the United States (US) have transformed the role of economic incentives in the North Korean crisis. Growing instability on the Korean Peninsula has prompted the international community to increase economic pressure on the “Hermit Kingdom.” For its part, the North Korean economy has evolved under a Kim regime that has given equal parity to nuclear and economic development. Increased economic pressure is also an important factor in Pyongyang’s recent decision to indicate its desire to return to the negotiating table

Although it has not signaled a willingness to relieve economic pressure, the international community must now begin to consider what incentives it might offer to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) should it display an inclination to reverse course on its nuclear ambitions. Formulating an appropriate negotiation strategy requires a consideration of: the effectiveness of economic sanctions to date, options for sanctions relief, and what role exists for positive economic incentives. An investigation of these considerations helps to inform medium- and long-term strategies for the use of positive and negative inducements in negotiations with the DPRK.

### **Evolution of Sanctions**

Although the DPRK’s motivations for returning to the negotiating table remain unclear, economic pressure is undoubtedly a key factor in Pyongyang’s decision. Economic pressure on the DPRK has intensified beyond what it has faced under previous rounds of sanctions. While a number of countries have adopted a hardened stance, China—the DPRK’s principal trade partner and economic lifeline—has displayed an increased willingness to adopt and enforce new sanctions. Economic exigencies at home, owing largely to increased military spending in the face of economic hardship, are also increasing the consequences of North Korea’s isolation from the global economy.

### **China Grows Teeth**

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Donald J. Trump tweeted “North Korea is reliant on China. China could solve this problem easily if they wanted to...” While Trump may have vastly understated the complexity and limitations of Chinese influence on the Korean Peninsula, China does play a central role in the context of economic considerations. Oscillating between \$5 and \$6 billion dollars of year since 2011, trade with China has constituted 90% of the DPRK’s total trade volume (Einhorn and Lee 2017; Holland and Spetalnick 2017). China also provides other critical lifelines for the DPRK in the form of crude oil exports and various foreign aid packages (Albert 2017).

Historically, the international community has struggled to cooperate with Chinese financial institutions on sanctions enforcement. Just last year, the US Justice Department identified 22 Chinese companies that were used as fronts for North Korean money laundering from 2009-2015 (Ruggiero 2017). Despite flagrant violations of sanctions via shell companies and money laundering schemes, the United Nations (UN) and US have largely avoided targeting Chinese banks, particularly larger banks, for the fear of potential repercussions for the global economy and US-China trade relations.

Despite these historical challenges, China has begun to assert its economic weight over the DPRK as a means to curb the Kim regime's belligerent behavior. China's newfound willingness to take a harder stance became evident when they approved a series of UN sanctions that drastically curbed their trade with North Korea. Over the course of 2017, resolutions 2321, 2371, 2375, and 2379 restricted key North Korean exports which ranged from minerals and coal to seafood. Evidence suggests that these sanctions were effectively enforced in the context of trade between China and North Korea. Despite the fact that these sanctions were enacted in the fall of 2017, China's trade with the DPRK for the entirety of 2017 dropped by more than 10% (Bloomberg News 2018). Additionally, evidence also suggests that principal Chinese banks have increased their efforts to enforce UN sanctions targeting the DPRK's connection to the global financial sector, namely resolutions 2094 and 2270 which target bulk cash transfers (Albert 2017). Outside the domain of formal trade, however, clamping down on illicit trade across China's border with the DPRK remains a significant challenge.

In the broader context of current Chinese-DPRK relations, China's willingness to exert economic pressure is unsurprising. Relations between the two countries have cooled in recent years, evidenced by a relative absence of diplomatic engagement at higher levels. China's discomfort with the instability caused by DPRK's missile tests, and the potential of these tests to provoke a military response from the Trump administration, have forced their hand. China is also increasingly confident in its military capacity to contain the humanitarian fallout and stabilize DPRK territories in the event of a North-South military confrontation (Mastro 2018). Un beholden to the stability of the Kim regime, China now holds additional leverage in its negotiations with the DPRK.

#### Increasingly Economically Isolated

The DPRK's options to diversify international trade and financial transactions outside of China are also increasingly limited. In addition to restrictions on foreign trade and financial transactions, recent sanctions have also targeted DPRK's laborers abroad. These laborers are a valuable source of government income, which places significant taxes on remittances. Though Russia and China continue to host a large number of North Korean laborers, countries including Poland, Qatar, and Kuwait have cut down on the number of DPRK workers in their countries (Aldag 2017).

### Russia to the Rescue?

Russia remains an important influence on North Korea's near- and long-term economic prospects. Eager to maintain its leadership status in the region, Russia has not hesitated to buck US efforts to increase pressure on North Korea. In order to maintain a leadership role and pursue economic interests in the region, Russia must balance a positive relationship with Pyongyang with its desire for stability on the Korean peninsula. As such, it can provide marginal support to the DPRK in the form of trade and energy exports, but it cannot outwardly support Pyongyang's actions that directly threaten peace and stability in the region.

In addition to disrupting existing economic stability, conflict on the peninsula disrupts long-planned tri-lateral economic plans between Russia, DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK). A stable and economically connected Korean Peninsula would provide an incredible boon for Russian economic activity in the region. Plans for a natural gas pipeline spanning from eastern Russia to Seoul provides a perfect example of this economic potential. The ROK is a large consumer of natural gas, the majority of which is currently imported as liquified natural gas (LNG). A pipeline through the Korean Peninsula would allow Russia to undercut the current gas market in the ROK by providing gas at significantly cheaper prices. This is just one example of the many long-term economic opportunities that drive a Russian strategy that pursues stability on the peninsula, and positive relations with the Pyongyang and Seoul simultaneously.

### **The Evolution of the North Korean Economy**

The North Korean economy, and the role it plays in the context of domestic governance, has evolved significantly under the Kim regime. The regime has introduced a new philosophy for balancing military and other government spending and allowed for increased marketization across the country. Both of these policy shifts have transformed the landscape of domestic economic elites and their influence. These developments must be taken into account when anticipating the effects of sanctions, sanctions relief and potential positive economic incentives on negotiations with the DPRK.

### The *Byungjin* Line or *Byungjin* Cycle?

To balance military and economic development, the Kim regime has championed the *Byungjin* Line policy. The policy justifies military spending, and more specifically nuclear program spending, on the grounds that it will ultimately save money. The regime argues that nuclear weapons will reduce the need for spending on conventional weapons, and development of nuclear energy will drive the economy forward. Without access to verifiable economic data on Pyongyang's finances, it is difficult to determine whether or not nuclear development and economic growth are mutually exclusive. Those who believe the two are indeed mutually exclusive, suggest that Pyongyang has adopted a system of cyclical spending, in which it alternates between spending on nuclear development and economic development (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018). This argument would also suggest that after a period

of considerable expansion of its nuclear program, the DPRK is now shifting its focus towards economic growth, which helps explain their recent turn towards rapprochement with the international community.

### Byungjin Bourgeoisie?

Regardless of the *Byungjin* Line policy, evidence suggests that North Korea's economy has both grown and evolved under the Kim Jong-un regime. In particular, Kim has allowed fledgling regional markets to develop under the condition that they pay significant taxes to the regime. In this context, the number of regional markets has nearly doubled since 2010, from which the Pyongyang collects an estimated \$220,000 (US) a day (Sang-Hun 2017). This growth was reflected in a budget report released by Pyongyang that indicated nearly ten percent growth in budgetary revenue emanating from outside Pyongyang from 2011 to 2016 (Ruediger 2016).

In addition to taxes, regional economic elites, dubbed *Donjus* or "Red Capitalists" provide a much-needed source of capital for government projects. Through a system of "loyalty donations," *Donjus* provide financial backing for large projects, such as building construction, in return for government benefits including trading rights and authorizations to operate in illicit economic activities (Feron 2017). Some hypothesize that this newfound access to finance may provide an explanation for a recent construction boom that has contributed to visible growth of the Pyongyang skyline. Without verifiable economic data, however, the extent of the impact of *Donjus* financing remains unclear (Feron 2017).

### Kim the Capitalist?

In allowing for increased marketization in North Korea, the Kim regime is taking on new risks. On the one hand, a larger, better integrated market provides a better buffer against economic hardship and famine that has plagued previous regimes. However, new demands of Pyongyang may accompany a growth of the economic elite class. As Pyongyang grows reliant on taxes and loyalty contributions from these markets, it may be increasingly difficult to ignore these demands. Increased movement of persons and goods also disrupts a system of compartmentalization that has typified North Korean governance to date. As ideas and information travel more quickly between regions, Pyongyang will have a hard time maintaining its strategy of "divide and rule."

### **Sanctions and the DPRK Economy**

Now that North Korea has signaled a preliminary willingness to return to the negotiating table in early 2018, stakeholders must now consider what role positive and negative economic inducements will play on the negotiating table. For their part, the US, Korea, and Japan have dismissed the possibility of removing sanctions unless Pyongyang abandons its nuclear ambitions. However, it remains unclear whether this position is absolute or if it instead represents where these parties have chosen to anchor their negotiating position. Though

Pyongyang has not signaled its intentions for upcoming negotiations, economic realities suggest that sanctions relief will be a primary goal of North Korean negotiators. In preparation for negotiating sanctions relief, it is important to specify how exactly the North Korean economy has been affected by the recent increase in sanctions.

#### Imports and Exports

After a period of growth, North Korea's key industries will take a substantial hit should sanctions remain in place and adequately enforced. As of 2016, manufacturing and mining constituted approximately one third of North Korea's GDP (Bank of Korea 2017). These industries will be hit hard by sanctions enacted in 2017, particularly as China reduces its imports of North Korean iron, coal, lead and textiles. Trade with China, and particularly North Korean exports, have dropped drastically since China instituted sanctions in the late 2017. Should sanctions remain in place, North Korea will continue to face drastic reductions in export revenue. Even after a 10% reduction in 2017 to a new total of \$5 billion USD, China's trade with North Korea represents a significant amount of money for a country with a GDP of \$28 billion USD. In addition to losses in government revenues, losses in export revenue will also jeopardize financing and political support provided by the DPRK's regional commercial elites

#### Financial Transactions

Little evidence has emerged to indicate whether or not China will limit North Korean financial transactions through its banks with the same speed and efficiency that it has stemmed cross-border trade. Limiting these transactions, however, is essential to any effort to place economic pressure on the DPRK. Not only do financial restrictions limit the North Korean government's transactions, but they will also obstruct the economic ambitions of a burgeoning market class in the country.

#### Black Market

The black market, particularly trade along the DPRK's border with China, will continue to evade the reach of sanctions. This northern region has been identified by defectors from North Korea as one of the most anti-government leaning regions in the country (SAIS Group Meeting, Seoul 24 January 2018). As such, it is fortunate for the Kim regime that the region does not bear the economic brunt of sanctions that have resulted from its nuclear ambitions. If China were to clamp down on illicit economic activity as a result of souring relations with Pyongyang, the north could very quickly become a troublesome region for the Kim regime.

#### **Sanctions, Economic Incentives and Future Negotiations**

Sanctions relief and positive inducements have played a considerable role in previous negotiations on the Korean Peninsula. Aid packages, humanitarian relief, joint industrial projects, and light water reactors have provided carrots to balance economic, political and military pressure that function as sticks (see chapter by Gay). Failure of these positive

incentives to stem Pyongyang's nuclear weapons development has somewhat tainted political and popular opinions on their effectiveness. As a result, sanctions and potential sanctions relief, rather than pure economic incentives, will likely remain the central economic consideration in the context of negotiations. In the long term, however, North-South Korean economic collaboration could continue to play a role as an incentive for de-nuclearization.

### Views from the South

Economic concerns play a central role in the South Korean unification dialogue. In the short term, South Korea has outwardly expressed support for sanctions, and underlined their importance as a means to pressure Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear ambitions. However, in the long term, South Korea sees economic collaboration with the North as foundational to peace, development and ultimately unification on the Korean peninsula. Whereas Pyongyang prioritizes political and military agreements, Seoul views the underdevelopment of the DPRK economy as one of the chief barriers to unification. For this reason, Seoul actively supports and advocates the development of a decentralized, market economy in North Korea.

Seoul has also drafted numerous strategies for cross-border economic collaboration, the most recent of which is the "New Economic Map." This vision identifies North-South collaboration on tourism, energy, natural resources and trade as the first step in linking the two countries' economies (Ji 2017). In emphasizing long-term economic plans that clearly outline the economic benefits of cross-border collaboration, this policy responds directly to certain aspects of South Korean public opinion. Not only have many South Koreans grown disenchanted with economic aid provided to North Korea in the past, but the youth are increasingly demanding that politicians prioritize economic growth over geopolitical considerations.

### The "Maximum Pressure Camp"

In addition to the ROK, the US and its allies have a vested interest in crippling the North Korean economy. Slowing economic activity in the country will both reduce the funds available for Pyongyang's nuclear weapon development and increase pressure on the senior leadership of the country to abandon its aggressive posture. Economic pressure also affords the United States increased leverage in potential upcoming negotiations.

### The Moderates

As previously discussed, Beijing and Russia must strike a more delicate balance in their support for and enforcement of economic pressure on the DPRK. Although Beijing in particular has taken a more aggressive stance, there is no indication that they will be willing to use their economic influence to push North Korea beyond an agreement to freeze its nuclear programs. Similarly, though it may continue to aggravate and publicly disparage the US campaign against North Korea's nuclear program, Russia will continue to pursue a freeze on Pyongyang's nuclear program, and stability on the region as its core interests.

## **Recommendations**

### To the Republic of Korea

- **Communicate cross-border economic ambitions directly to North Korean economic elites.** Pyongyang's increasing acceptance of the marketization of its economy is a boon for Seoul's long-term strategy of economic unification. As such, it should take proactive steps to encourage this trend wherever possible. Engaging DPRK's economic elites on the opportunities and challenges linked to unification is a practical first step in this regard. Discussing potential benefits of unification will also make clear to North Korea's economic elites how their ambitions are limited by the Kim regime's nuclear weapons program. A clear understanding of these limits should, in turn, inspire these elites to increase their pressure on Pyongyang to do whatever is necessary to lift sanctions.
- **Ascertain North Korea's economic ambitions.** Pyongyang, as of yet, has not indicated what positive economic inducements it might seek in the context of negotiations. It is fair to assume that sanctions relief will be of paramount concern, but other positive inducements desired by Pyongyang remain unclear. In anticipation of upcoming talks, Seoul should make a concerted effort to identify what the regime views as the most important economic issues at stake in negotiations. This information would help inform the ROK's economic unification plans, and potentially identify mutually acceptable economic incentives for future negotiations.

### To the United States

- **Publicly acknowledge improvement in Chinese enforcement of sanctions.** Regardless of their motivations or long-term strategy, the United States should publicly signal its appreciation for China's improved efforts in its enforcement of sanctions. These sanctions are helping to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. They also increase the leverage available to the US. Publicly acknowledging Beijing's efforts, in a form more substantial than a tweet, should provide a measure of diplomatic goodwill that could help the US build on recent improvements in China's behavior towards the DPRK.
- **Create joint US-Chinese financial sanctions enforcement platform.** Though a decrease in Chinese-North Korean trade volumes is a potential signal of improved sanctions enforcement, the effectiveness of Chinese efforts to curb North Korea's use of its financial sector remain unclear. A collaborative body made up of US and Chinese financial actors and regulators would provide a valuable platform to share good practices and provide necessary support for financial sanctions enforcement.
- **Privately encourage China to increase regulation of informal economy along its border with North Korea.** The DPRK's informal economy provides an important source of revenue for the DPRK government, and pacifies a historically anti-government region in the country. As much as possible, the US should encourage China

to crack down on illicit economic activity along its border with North Korea. This may be a large ask of Beijing, but the recent deterioration of their relations with Pyongyang may provide a unique window of opportunity to make progress on this front.

- **Expand energy collaboration with South Korea.** Energy collaboration has played a central role in the Moon administration's plans for economic unification. Shared infrastructure and networks, however, have geopolitical implications beyond the Korean peninsula. As an energy importer particularly reliant on natural gas, South Korea understandably views North Korea as a gateway to Russian natural gas. The US should work directly with Seoul to develop energy plans that mitigate the potential geopolitical impact of a Korean Peninsula reliant on Russian energy imports.
- **Increase engagement in South Korea's economic unification planning.** A liberalized North Korean economy serves both South Korean and American interests. An economic class that asks more questions of Pyongyang and bears the economic brunt of sanctions resulting from the Kim Regime's nuclear policy is a potentially valuable political tool. The United States should work closely with the Seoul to demonstrate its support for economic unification planning. US support for this initiative in the form of financial support, trade incentives, or other mechanisms might help encourage buy-in from North Korean economic elites.

**Part II: Negotiating the Nuclear Crisis and Peace  
on the Korean Peninsula**



## **When Does the Impossible become Possible? Negotiating with the People's Democratic Republic of Korea**

Rona Vaselaar

One of the most important issues facing global security today is the ongoing nuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Although the United States and other strong global actors have attempted to convince the DPRK, both through coercion and incentivization, to abandon its attempts to cross the nuclear threshold, the DPRK appears steadily on-track to becoming the next nuclear power. The question facing the new administration in the United States is this: how do we stop the DPRK from becoming a nuclear power? Although many people still argue in favor of negotiating with the DPRK, it is difficult to imagine a world in which the DPRK and the United States can come to a negotiated agreement, particularly with trust on both sides at an all-time low. How, then, can we build a negotiation process that lends itself to success for all parties involved in the conflict?

In this paper, I argue that a problem-solving approach focusing on trust-building between the DPRK and the United States is the negotiation method best suited to achieving denuclearization and stability of the Korean Peninsula. The first section of this paper will be devoted to analyzing what lessons we can learn from past negotiations with the DPRK. The next section will detail the different types of negotiation strategies, including the benefits and drawbacks of each, some of which have worked in the past and others which have failed. I will conclude by recapping what roadblocks are most important for the international community, and the United States in particular, to tackle when considering reopening negotiations with the DPRK. Finally, I will put forth several policy recommendations designed to approach these roadblocks.

### **School is in Session: Lessons from Past Failures**

The limited focus of this paper is not conducive for a detailed analysis of the history of DPRK negotiations. Rather than attempting to give a historical overview, I will focus on a few major lessons that the international community can learn from repeated failed negotiations concerning the Korean Peninsula. Due to the centrality of the United States in previous negotiations, as well as the Korean Peninsula crisis as a whole, I will focus mostly on the bilateral negotiations between the DPRK and the United States.

The first lesson is that the DPRK approaches negotiation with a tit-for-tat strategy. As pointed out by Leon V. Sigal, the DPRK has consistently used a tit-for-tat approach to attempt to engage with the United States, while also making sure that Washington upholds its end of the deals negotiated between the two countries. A good example of Pyongyang's strategy comes to us from an incident in 1998. Based on the 1994 Agreed Framework, the DPRK would freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear weapons program. In exchange, Washington would supply the DPRK with two light-water reactors while simultaneously enacting other measures

of good will, such as ending economic sanctions. However, the Bush administration reneged on the deal (Sigal 2002, 8). Rather than immediately breaking the deal, in 1997 the DPRK attempted to re-engage Washington in negotiations, offering up its missiles as a reward for cooperation. Washington refused, which resulted in the DPRK testing a missile in retaliation. The DPRK offered rewards and punishments for cooperation, and only proceeded to punish Washington when it became clear that the United States had no intention of honoring the agreement—therefore, we can see that the DPRK was operating on a tit-for-tat basis (Sigal 2002, 9). The DPRK has often tried to use inducements to convince the United States to enter into negotiations—for example, in the wake of 9/11 when the DPRK offered to cooperate with Washington to combat terrorism. Unfortunately, the Bush administration also rejected this offer (Sigal 2002, 9). Had the Bush administration been willing to engage in tit-for-tat and rewarded the DPRK for cooperating and even taking the initiative to confront the issue of denuclearization, the two countries might have made substantial progress on the issue of the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The second lesson is that policymakers and negotiators need to focus on understanding what both the DPRK and the United States really want, not just what the two sides say they want. Washington has misunderstood Pyongyang's true needs and wants throughout the crisis. While it is often assumed that the DPRK's primary objective is to achieve nuclear capability, there is a deeper and more central desire underlying this goal. What the DPRK really seeks is an end to American hostility. Much of Pyongyang's actions have been misinterpreted due to Washington's oversight of this particular reality. For example, Pyongyang's request for the light-water reactors was not just an economic move. Rather, it was a political tactic to draw the United States into long-term involvement with the DPRK, thus presenting the opportunity to normalize relations (Carlin and Lewis 2008, 5). For the DPRK, normalizing relations with Washington would go a long way towards alleviating its security concerns. One of the reasons that Kim Il-sung was so willing to engage the United States in negotiations was a growing concern over the threat that China and Russia posed (Carlin and Lewis 2008, 3). When looking at the DPRK in a contemporary context, it is clear that they are threatened on almost every side—they have a rocky relationship with China at best, and Japan and South Korea are both allied with the United States. Were Pyongyang to normalize relations with Washington, many of these threats would be substantially reduced.

The DPRK must also understand what the United States wants. In the past, lack of effective communication made it difficult for the DPRK to understand what issues were most important to the United States. In particular, Washington failed to impress upon the DPRK their concern over Pyongyang's ballistic missile program, in large part because Washington showed little urgency or initiative in scheduling talks regarding that program in contrast to its testing of nuclear warheads (Carlin and Lewis 2008, 6). As a result, the DPRK underestimated Washington's prioritization of the issue, just as Washington has continually overlooked the DPRK's deeper motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons.

The third and final lesson is one regarding the importance of trust. Trust has been extremely hard to establish between Pyongyang and Washington, and repeated failure to live up to agreements has led to both sides deeply distrusting the other, which dooms future negotiations to failure unless amended. The main reason that the two sides consistently lack trust can be partially attributed to the United States' constant foreign policy changes. Due to the nature of the American government system, every four years there is an opportunity for a significant if not complete political shift in Washington. Because the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have very different North Korea strategies, Washington's North Korea policy is seriously lacking in consistency. In fact, the major reason that the Agreed Framework failed was a change in the American government. Most of the work for the Agreed Framework was done under President Clinton. Once he left office, his successor, President Bush, felt that the Framework was "fatally flawed" and sought to dismantle it completely (Carlin and Lewis 2008, 11). Bush's new DPRK policy destroyed the promising start to a more peaceful bilateral relationship that had been forged by the Agreed Framework, leaving the DPRK with serious trust issues regarding dealing with Washington. Similarly, Washington's continued assertion that the DPRK reneged on the Agreed Framework—which it did after Washington failed to comply with the Framework—caused the American people and many American policymakers to distrust the DPRK on principle. As a result, neither side feels it can trust the other. It is particularly challenging for the DPRK because, while their regime never changes (except through succession within the Kim dynasty) and they have a consistent policy towards the United States, Washington's policy towards the DPRK is constantly changing and can be volatily unpredictable.

These three lessons are vital to future negotiations. In order for a negotiation to be successful in the future, it follows that three conditions need to be met. First, the United States must understand that the DPRK typically follows a tit-for-tat strategy of negotiation and will need to prepare accordingly. Second, the United States must clearly communicate its needs and wants, while also seeking to understand the needs and wants that the DPRK may not be clearly communicating. Third, the United States must find a way to build trust and counter the effects of its constantly-changing foreign policy.

### **Negotiating Techniques: the Good, the Bad, and the Largely Ineffective**

There are two major negotiating techniques that have factored into past negotiations between the United States and the DPRK. Both have their strong and weak points, and the United States has been continually divided over which technique is most effective for this particular case. In this section, I will outline these major techniques, introduce the benefits and drawbacks of each, and discuss how they have each been employed in previous negotiations with the DPRK.

The first negotiation technique is hard bargaining. Hard bargaining is a rigid technique often employed by realists (Hopmann 1995, 41-42). It is characterized by two sides attempting to find common ground between each other's BATNA—the best alternative to a negotiated agreement. During typical bargaining, both parties make a series of concessions in order to

come to a mutually acceptable arrangement (Hopmann 1996, 59). However, a participant who is making use of hard bargaining is likely to try to extract maximum concessions from its opponent while making minimal concessions itself. This strategy is facilitated by the emphasis on manipulative techniques like threats emphasized in the bargaining tradition (Hopmann 1996, 54). Hard bargaining has certain advantages. For example, a participant may be able to strike a deal that is definitively favorable to them rather than the other side through use of hard bargaining tactics. However, it also has significant disadvantages, particularly when we are considering the dynamic between Pyongyang and Washington. One major disadvantage is that bargaining tends to emphasize the importance of taking inflexible positions, which can lead to ineffective communication. Another issue is that bargaining puts the focus on the conflictual (often zero-sum) nature of the negotiations, rather than emphasizing the possible points of convergence (Hopmann 1996, 76). The Bush administration focused on hard bargaining techniques to deal with the DPRK. Bush took a firm stance against the DPRK by referring to it as a part of an “axis of evil” and imposed sanctions as punishment for reneging on the Agreed Framework (Goldman 2017). The Trump administration also appears to be engaging in hard bargaining tactics, by refusing to negotiate with the DPRK until it “refrain(s) from any further provocations and take(s) sincere and meaningful actions towards denuclearization” (Cohen and Todd 2017). By placing preconditions on the negotiations, the Trump administration is essentially demanding that the DPRK first give Washington a major concession. By threatening to withhold negotiations until its demands are satisfied, the Trump administration is using a hard-bargaining tactic. The result of Washington’s emphasis on hard bargaining is an “endless cycle of provocations and pressure,” which has not furthered the ultimate goal of a peaceful denuclearization of the DPRK (Kyodo 2017).

On the other side of the negotiation spectrum is the problem-solving approach. Whereas hard bargaining views negotiations as a zero-sum game, problem solving turns it into a non-zero-sum game. Significant attention is given to diagnosis of the conflict itself, through such means as setting agendas and discussing timelines. The parties take a constructive approach to the conflict: redefining the problem, engaging in creative problem-solving, etc. Importance is placed on long-term gains. This model depends much more on effective communication than hard bargaining. In the hard-bargaining model, secrecy may be an asset because it allows you to convince your opponent that you cannot give up as much as you may be willing to in actuality. By contrast, the problem-solving model won’t work without clear communication. Some of the advantages of this model are that it expands the possible solutions for dealing with the conflict and it improves working relationships between the opponents. It also results in both sides to a negotiation having a clearer understanding of each other’s priorities. However, this model does have some significant drawbacks. For example, if one participant is more willing to cooperate than the other, they may end up conceding much more than the other party. Additionally, the problem-solving process can be especially long, particularly because trust has to be built up for the model to work effectively. The Clinton administration was more willing to engage in problem-solving than either the Bush or Trump administrations. The

Agreed Framework took place under the Clinton administration, and during this time period the United States and the DPRK cooperated through reciprocal concessions and made significant progress towards achieving the goals of both countries (Sigal 2002, 9-10).

### **Conclusion**

Past negotiations with the DPRK have been ineffective, largely due to communication issues and a lack of stability in the relationship, resulting from constantly changing regimes and mutual distrust. Analyzing past negotiations tells us that Washington needs to change its approach to the DPRK if future negotiations are to have any chance of success. Washington and Pyongyang will need to build trust and communicate more effectively if the dynamic between the two countries is to change. If steps are not taken to change the current course of events, then it is only a matter of time before the DPRK achieves full nuclear capabilities and the world will have to confront the reality of living with a nuclearized Korean Peninsula.

The current administration in the United States appears to be fairly committed to a hard-bargaining approach. However, there is an opportunity for change on the horizon. The DPRK has recently entered into talks with the Republic of Korea (ROK) prior to the PyeongChang Olympics. It appears that the DPRK is attempting to signal to Washington that it desires more bilateral talks. If the DPRK makes significant progress in diffusing tension in the Korean Peninsula by working with the ROK, it is possible that Washington may consider altering its tactics and adopting a more problem-solving approach to the issue. Because of this situation, the ROK is in a position to advance cooperation between Pyongyang and Washington.

Although this paper has focused primarily on the bilateral dimension between the United States and the DPRK, in reality the Korean Peninsula conflict is a multilateral issue. It affects the entirety of the East Asia region, as well as other international actors. Other countries in the region may provide a significant role in encouraging the United States and the DPRK to reopen negotiations in a constructive manner. China, for instance, as Yan points out in her chapter, has a vested interest in mitigating the conflict, particularly as it contributes to regional instability. China could use its economic might to incentivize the DPRK to continue to adopt a cooperative attitude towards talks with the ROK and negotiations with the United States.

Another key actor in the conflict is Russia. Although Russia is loath to intervene in another country's sovereign matters, as Barnes argues in his chapter, it also has a vested interest in nuclear nonproliferation and in building its reputation as a constructive member of the international community (Lukin 2017). Additionally, it shares the closest relationship with the DPRK, especially now that DPRK relations with China have deteriorated (Lukin 2017). If the Korean Peninsula conflict can be resolved peacefully, Russia stands to gain substantially—being able to lift economic sanctions on the DPRK would be good for Russia economically, and Russian involvement in a peaceful negotiation in the conflict could raise its position of power in Northeast Asia, which is particularly attractive to Russia as it is seeking a multipolar balance of power in the region (Lukin 2017). As such, it would be strategically advantageous for Russia to engage with the conflict.

## Recommendations

### To the Republic of Korea

- **Engage sincerely with the DPRK and approach talks with a problem-solving attitude.** If talks with the DPRK are successful, it could signal to the United States that the DPRK is taking the issue of denuclearization and conflict management in the region seriously, which could prompt the United States to engage the DPRK with a more cooperative and constructive approach.

### To the United States

- **Change the approach to negotiating with the DPRK from hard bargaining to problem-solving.** Hard bargaining has not been successful in the past. Sigal's observation some 15 years ago still appears applicable today, namely that "the crime-and-punishment approach has never worked before, and there is no reason to believe that it will work now" (Sigal 2002, 12). The Clinton administration came the closest to resolving the issue of the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Although the Agreed Framework was, in the end, far from successful, this outcome was due more to the hard-bargaining techniques of the Bush administration rather than the problem-solving approach of the Clinton administration. Pursuing a consistent policy towards the DPRK founded on a problem-solving basis can help diffuse tension in the region.
- **Refrain from using punishing/threatening tactics to attempt to coerce the DPRK to cooperate.** The DPRK desires an end to American hostility, and it currently views nuclear weapons as a way to defend against this hostility (Sigal 2002, 9). Continued punishments and rewards by the US will only reinforce the view that the DPRK needs to be afraid of America, which will result in an even stronger attachment to its developing nuclear arms program. The DPRK wants regime security assurance from America (Cha 2009, 126). Additionally, according to Robert Gallucci, they expect to achieve said assurance through diplomacy (Hastings 2017). If it believes that America is simply waiting for the opportune moment to topple its regime, it will never give up its nuclear arms, and eventually the world will have to live with a nuclearized DPRK. By discontinuing use of threats and punishments, Washington will be signaling to the DPRK that it means no harm, which is crucial to convincing Pyongyang that it is safe to dismantle their nuclear weapons program.
- **Find ways to incentivize the DPRK to cooperate.** If the manipulation tactics favored by hard bargaining are ineffective, then it is useful to change tracks and instead engage with the DPRK's favored method of negotiation, the tit-for-tat strategy. It is fairly easy for the United States to incentivize the DPRK, although there are multiple approaches. The first approach is the economic approach—the United States could choose to end economic sanctions to induce the DPRK to cooperate, or reward it for doing so. However, as discussed earlier in this paper, what the DPRK wants most from the United States are *political* incentives. It is my recommendation, then, that Washington focus

on rewarding the DPRK in the political sphere. Even symbolic gestures, such as public declarations of goodwill towards the DPRK, could be extremely effective. While economic incentives are also an attractive option, political sanctions go further to address the root of the DPRK's fears and will make them much more willing to cooperate as negotiations progress.

- **Find a way to generate a consistent DPRK foreign policy that will not change drastically with each regime change.** This challenge is perhaps the most daunting, but it is also fundamental to building trust between Pyongyang and Washington. As long as the DPRK has to worry about future regimes reneging on negotiated deals, it won't approach negotiations with the US in a constructive manner. The US government needs to construct a bipartisan DPRK policy, one which successive administrations will, for the most part, agree to follow. Due to the growing divide between the Democratic and Republican parties, extensive bipartisan interaction and problem-solving are necessary to build the required consensus for such a policy. If the US can achieve such a consensus, however, it will simplify the conflict at hand, resulting in a major step forward for USA/DPRK negotiations.
- **Initiate an extensive and exhaustive prenegotiation phase.** As defined by Zartman, prenegotiation, "begins when one or more parties considers negotiation as a policy option and communicates this intention to other parties. It ends when parties agree to formal negotiations... or when one party abandons the consideration of negotiation as an option" (Zartman 1989, 240). It gives the parties to a negotiation the opportunity to prepare jointly for the negotiation, and thus expand channels of communication and improve mutual understandings of each other's goals, needs, and positions. Utilizing a prenegotiation has many benefits for the actors. One of the benefits is that it gives the parties the opportunity to assess each other as well as the costs of negotiations and decide whether it is worth the risk to negotiate. Prenegotiations also facilitate trust-building and establish boundaries (Zartman 1989, 243-248). The prenegotiation phase can give the United States the opportunity to convince the DPRK that it is approaching the negotiations with the intent to cooperate. This method also assures Pyongyang that Washington is interested as addressing issues as shared problems and proposing shared solutions; during the Agreed Framework negotiations, the DPRK wouldn't move on from an issue unless it was assured that the US was treating the issue in this light (Carlin and Lewis 2008, 8). In a general sense, the prenegotiation phase will give Washington and Pyongyang the opportunity to build trust in a relatively low-risk environment and come to a mutual understanding about the scope and boundaries of the proposed negotiations. A prenegotiation will give Washington and Pyongyang a head-start in dealing with contentious issues that could otherwise crop up later in the negotiation phase and impede progress at crucial points in the process. Additionally, the prenegotiation phase should occur without preconditions (Kyodo 2017). By placing

preconditions on the DPRK, Washington is hindering the process rather than helping it.

- **Pay close attention to Pyongyang's interactions with Seoul.** If the DPRK is cooperative when entering into talks with the ROK, and if these talks continue after the PyeongChang Olympics have concluded, it will be a strong indicator that the DPRK is taking the issue of the Korean Peninsula conflict seriously, and Washington will have a perfect opportunity to act and engage the DPRK constructively. It is crucial that Washington approach the DPRK with a positive attitude—rather than punish the DPRK; it would be prudent for Washington to reward the DPRK for taking the initiative to engage with Seoul.

#### To China

- **Incentivize the DPRK to cooperate with the ROK and the United States.** A good incentive would be to end economic sanctions against the DPRK. The DPRK has not always been trusting of China, and the two have had an unstable relationship for many years. Rewarding the DPRK for taking cooperative and constructive action could not only help diffuse tensions in the region and increase the chances of a successful negotiation, it could also result in a better relationship between the ROK and the DPRK. Thus, China has everything to gain from helping incentivize the DPRK to cooperate.

#### To Russia

- **Cooperate closely with China to resolve the Korean Peninsula conflict.** Russia and China have grown closer in the wake of the Trump administration (Lukin 2017). While this situation may not be advantageous for Washington, it could help contribute to resolving tensions with the DPRK. Russia should cooperate with China to incentivize the DPRK to cooperate
- **Communicate with Washington on the issue.** Although Moscow and Washington are in the midst of a crisis in their relationship, it is crucial that the two sides refrain from undermining each other—intentionally or otherwise—in the context of this conflict. Therefore, Russia and the United States need to remain in close contact when considering their options moving forward. Ideally, the two sides would have consistent and compatible policies towards the DPRK, but at the very least, the two sides should not be openly antagonistic and contradictory on the issue.

## **Maximum Pressure, Maximum Opportunity?**

Christina Gay

It has been over ten years since the collapse of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and the end of Six-Party Talks, and since then the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program development has escalated dramatically. The United States (US), Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan and the UN have steadily increased sanctions to isolate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as it has continued to conduct bomb tests, launch intercontinental missiles, and flaunt its nuclear capabilities. But the DPRK's participation in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Seoul and the reopening of talks on the peninsula could represent a decisive shift in the Korean conflict, and an opportunity for policy-makers to bring North Korea to the negotiating table and de-escalate what has grown steadily closer to a nuclear crisis.

This paper will analyze the current "maximum pressure, maximum opportunity" strategy from a negotiation standpoint and build on previous theories on the use of positive and negative inducements to influence parties' behavior. The beginning will review existing theory behind sanctions and negative inducements in negotiations. The second part of the paper will analyze the history of North Korean sanctions and US-ROK policy towards Pyongyang. Thirdly, the paper will explore options moving forward, and the possibility of offering positive inducements. The final section makes recommendations for future policy if negotiations are to continue.

### **Carrots and Sticks**

Conflicts are considered "ripe" for negotiation when both parties are caught in a mutually hurting stalemate, or a situation in which both parties no longer benefit from continued conflict (Zartman 1986, 218). The use of "carrots," positive inducements, and "sticks," negative inducements, can be used both as part of a negotiation package or by outside parties to change the calculus of countries towards negotiation. Negotiation theory has previously recognized the value of combining incentives and pressures. While disagreements often arise when discussing the "proper mix," threatening punishments for bad behavior while offering rewards for positive steps for peace can work to change individual parties' calculus in choosing between continued escalation, military conflict, or negotiations. Former Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns emphasized this in discussing the Bush administration's strategy in persuading Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program, stating that "in this type of crisis, you do not want to de-link the threat of force with diplomacy" (Burns 2007). The current strategy by the United States, ROK, and Japan has focused primarily on "maximum pressure," through economic and political sanctions and diplomatic pressure intended to bring North Korea to the negotiating table.

### Sticks: The Current Sanctions Regime

Since North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006, the UN Security Council (UNSC) has unanimously passed nine rounds of sanctions. Sanctions have increased in severity overtime to include: bans on trade of arms and military equipment, bans on the exports of labor, oil and refined petroleum products, coal, and other goods, and asset freezes for individuals involved in the country's nuclear program (Albert 2018). The EU also has imposed supplemental economic restrictions, including bans on EU investment across economic sectors and banning admission and residency of persons who have worked on the country's weapons program. The US has imposed sweeping sanctions against the DPRK, both to disincentivize the regime's development of nuclear weapons, as well as to respond to North Korean cyberattacks against the US. Historically, US presidents have imposed sanctions on Pyongyang independently, but in 2016 Congress passed its first sanctions bill against the regime including the following sanctions:

- Loss of access to the US financial system, civil or criminal penalties to entities found to have contributed to North Korea's WMD program
- Sanctions against entities involved in mineral or metal trade
- Discretionary authority for the president to sanction entities that provide support to persons sanctioned by the UN Security Council
- Blocking of any property belonging to the North Korean government, the Korean Worker's Party, or a person working on their behalf
- New sanctions authorities related to North Korean human rights abuses and violations of cybersecurity (NCNK, 1).

In June of 2016 the US Department of Treasury also took action to restrict further the DPRK's access to the US financial system by announcing it is a jurisdiction of "primary money laundering concern" under the USA Patriot Act (US Department of Treasury). This designation further isolates North Korea from the international financial system. President Trump also authorized the US Department of Treasury to block North Koreans, and those who do business with or on behalf of North Koreans, from accessing the US financial system (Snyder 2017). President Trump also re-designated North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism after the death of a US student detained in North Korea, which placed another layer of sanctions on the regime (Mason and Brunnstrom 2017). The US has called on China to cut off its oil supplies to North Korea and for maritime interdictions of vessels transporting goods to and from the regime. China voted for the August 5 round of sanctions but has drawn a line at measures that would destabilize the regime (Einhorn 2017, 3).

Different leaders from the ROK have taken different approaches toward Pyongyang, truncating sanctions with different approaches at bilateral exchanges, humanitarian aid, and economic cooperation. For example, a jointly run industrial park in North Korea, the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), was launched in 2004 to increase cooperation, ease tensions, and begin to reform North Korea's economy. By 2016, it was the largest contributor to inter-Korean trade, with 124 companies operating in the KIC and employing 54,000 North Korean

workers. However, South Korea indefinitely suspended the industrial complex in February 2016 in retaliation for a long-range rocket launched by the DPRK (McCurry 2016). President Moon has supported new rounds of international sanctions, and South Korean customs seized vessels in late 2017 suspected of transferring oil products to North Korea in violation of international sanctions (Park and Jin 2017).

As a whole, the September 2017 round of sanctions under UN Resolution 2375 are the strongest sanctions ever imposed on North Korea that target their major exports. The resolution fully bans the export of textiles, prevents overseas workers from earning wages that could finance the regime, and reduces around 30% of oil provided to North Korea (US Mission to the UN 2017).

Despite the overwhelming reliance on international sanctions as the “maximum pressure” on the DPRK, historically, economic sanctions have been limited in their effectiveness. Recent empirical analyses have found that between 1915 and 2006 comprehensive sanctions were successful, at best, 30% of the time, and likely to be less effective the longer they are in place (Cashen 2017). The mixed results of comprehensive sanctions, which affect the entire country, have led to increased calls for targeted sanctions, which are applicable to small, usually elite members of states. This is not to say that all sanctions are ineffective; UN sanctions were critical in negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran to comply with limits to its uranium enrichment program. Empirical studies have found that sanctions are most effective in disputes involving minor issues that do not affect sovereignty, territory, or security; against target states whose trade is completely dependent on the coercer; when applied multilaterally or against friendly nations; or against societies with higher income inequality (Pape 2003, 110; GAO 1992, 12). Expanded studies of sanctions also found that they serve multiple goals beyond the targeted nation’s compliance, including enhancing the prestige of the sanctioning government, acting as a symbol of deterrence or resolve, or serving as a measure to make future threats of force more credible (GAO 1992, 14). Sanctions also often inflict significant human cost and suffering to the populations of target states. Over 70% of the population in North Korea remains food insecure, and the trade sanctions and restrictions on aid have only exacerbated insecurity (Cashen 2017). North Korea spends one third of its \$30 billion gross national income, and 30% of its total oil use on its military. While sanctions that reduce hard currency export earnings and energy imports are targeted towards impacting its military, the DPRK’s military is the most highly prioritized sector and the last to experience budget and resource cuts (Hewitt 2018). Sanctions would likely lead to channeling of tightened resources away from the general population and back towards the military and regime elites.

#### Carrots: Possibility for Positive Inducements?

“Carrots” in negotiation are positive inducements that the counterpart values, and can include “economic benefits, sharing essential resources, international approval, integration in regional or global institutions, or a general reduction in the level of tensions” (Kelman 2007, 72). The Agreed Framework provides an example of successful US-DPRK engagement to de-escalate

tensions, and thus served as successful positive inducements. The framework was negotiated in 1994 between the US and North Korea and called on Pyongyang to freeze operation and construction of its nuclear reactors suspected of being a part of a covert nuclear weapons program, in exchange for two proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors. The US also agreed to provide North Korea with fuel oil, pending construction of the reactors and formed the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an international consortium to implement the agreement. While North Korea eventually reneged on its pledge to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear weapons program, the agreement successfully paused North Korean nuclear pursuits for eight years, and ended the 18-month crisis during which North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Robert Gallucci, former US State Department ambassador at large on the North Korean nuclear issue and architect of the Agreed Framework, advises that the Trump administration emphasize dialogue and negotiations in future dealings with Pyongyang. While he agreed on maintaining tough sanctions, “sanctions alone are not the answer” (Gallucci 2017). He emphasizes the importance of recognizing what kind of agenda North Korea wants, and engaging in credible talks without preconditions. A nuclear weapons-free peninsula is possible if the North is convinced that their relationship with the US has matured to the point that they are no longer concerned about the US attempting regime change (Gallucci 2017).

The current maximum pressure, maximum opportunity strategy of the US and ROK sets freezing nuclear testing and “confidence building measures” from the DPRK before either party will consider providing positive inducements. Both touted North Korea’s testing as provocations that should not be rewarded, and are weary of loosening pressure that might reduce consequences of further escalation. However, North Korea will likely view its recent diplomatic engagement and offer to freeze testing as a significant step forward and will eventually expect reciprocity or confidence-building measures in return from the US. Moving forward, both the US and ROK should consider possible positive inducements that they can provide in a step-by step approach to denuclearizing North Korea. Kim Jong-un won’t indefinitely bow under international pressures without receiving some sort of guarantee, economic opportunity, or international integration.

### **Current Policy of the ROK**

The ROK’s previous policies towards its northern counterpart have changed with administration changes, often changing policy based on the current administration holding power. From 1998 to 2008, the ROK pursued the Sunshine policy of engagement with Pyongyang on economic and political issues. This policy allowed President Kim Dae-jung to earn the Nobel Peace Prize. President Park Geun-hye was much more conservative, advocating for a hard line against North Korea’s nuclear provocations with tough sanctions and aggressive rhetoric. Following her removal in 2017, the current president, Moon Jae-in, was elected after running on a progressive platform of engagement and economic cooperation.

President Moon Jae-in's current policy on the Korean Peninsula states the vision of "Peaceful Coexistence and Co-Prosperity" to be achieved through three goals:

1. Resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue
2. Development of sustainable inter-Korean relations
3. Realization of a new economic community on the Korean peninsula

President Moon's policy touts the DPRK development of nuclear weapons as "simply unacceptable." The official approach released by the Ministry of Unification calls for the ROK to play a 'driving role' to implement sanctions while pushing forward with dialogue (Ministry of Unification). The plan recites sanctions and pressure to stop North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations, and to pull North Korea to the negotiating table. Only then, when "conditions are set," can they closely cooperate to push forward with complete disarmament of the DPRK's nuclear program, starting with a nuclear freeze. The policy calls for a step-by-step and comprehensive approach to dealing with Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, and then moving forward with building political and military trust between the two Koreas.

### **Negotiating with Democracies**

Diplomats and policy makers from both the US and ROK are mindful of election cycles, which not only create more urgent timetables for negotiations, but make credible, long-term commitments difficult. Democracies are more sensitive to media and political pressures, especially on issues with high domestic public or political profile (Solomon and Quincy 2010, 71).

US presidents are beholden to their domestic constituencies; the policies put forward by the president will be a product of domestic US public opinion, party dynamics within Congress, and the proximity to an upcoming election. This has historically resulted in a change in the US position towards North Korea with every change in administration. Clinton's 1994 agreed framework froze Pyongyang's nuclear program and aimed to normalize North Korean relations, but the US failed or was slow to deliver on many of its promises: heavy fuel shipments from the US were often delayed, light water reactors were never built, republicans in Congress derided the framework for rewarding aggressive behavior, and the US did not lift limited sanctions or provide formal assurances in the framework agreement until 2000 (Kartman, Carlin, and Witt 2012 169; US Department of State 2000). President Bush formally withdrew from the deal, accusing North Korea of cheating on its obligations and labelling it a country in the "axis of evil" (Bush 2002). "Strategic patience" under Obama tried to work towards forced denuclearization by continuing to isolate the North Korean regime, but only allowed North Korea the space to develop its nuclear weapons program without the incentive to change behavior, allowing it to remain a member of the international community (Obama 2015). Completely isolating North Korea only increasingly left the regime with nothing left to lose as it pursued building its nuclear weapons capability undaunted.

President Trump made a pivot from the Obama administration's more careful approach to the regime, calling for "fire and fury" from the United States (Baker and Sang Hun 2017).

The “maximum pressure campaign” involves sanctions and demands for increased pressure from China to force denuclearization, while the White house cultivates the impression of its willingness to use force, despite the likely catastrophic consequences (International Crisis Group January 2018 N° 293). In his first address to the United Nations, President Trump stated: “The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime.” Even within President Trump’s administration, contradictory statements from the President, Secretary of State Tillerson, members of Congress and the military leadership have emerged and even directly conflicted with one another, making credible signaling from the US difficult. President Trump has said Secretary Tillerson was “wasting his time” with backchannel negotiations, but subsequently shifted to calling for an agreement, stating: “If we can make a deal, it will be a great thing” (Landler 2018). On January 16, 2018, Chrystia Freeland, the Canadian foreign minister, along with Secretary Tillerson, reiterated that the US will not accept a nuclear-armed North Korea and called for increased international pressure on North Korea through more effective sanctions implementation and compliance (US Department of State). The recent dismissal of Secretary of State Tillerson adds another layer of unpredictability; confirmation of Mike Pompeo, who has gained a reputation for more hawkish positions on North Korea as well as Iran and Russia, could reinforce Trump’s more bellicose and escalatory rhetoric. Signaling will be critical moving forward. Continuing the bellicose rhetoric used by Trump thus far risks losing the progress made so far and reverting back to an escalatory spiral. North Korea will undoubtedly have its eyes on the future of the Iranian nuclear deal, from which Trump has repeatedly threatened to withdraw. A withdrawal from the agreement, made under the Obama between the US China, Russia, Britain, Germany, and the European Union, would fuel DPRK claims of inconsistency and demonstrate a lack of long-term credible commitments from the United States. Sanctions literature has described the need for consistency and time for sanctions to effectively influence behavior. In order for the maximum pressure, maximum opportunity strategy to continue to bring North Korea to the table, the US will need to maintain a consistent strategy that encourages diplomacy and doesn’t threaten Kim Jong-un to re-escalate. Subsequently, the US should work to institutionalize commitments either within US law or in a UN resolution.

### **Understanding the North Korean Regime**

The end of Soviet protection left North Korea vulnerable to the US and its allies. Rather than risk an imposed German-style reunification where the South would absorb the North under its rule, North Korea instead built up its military to assert its legitimacy and to deter an outside attack (see chapter by Arias). North Korea has since positioned itself in a perpetual state of near-war, enhancing its military to deter what it views as an impending attack. While in the early 2000s the survivability of the North Korean state was largely in question, with the successful transfer of power to Kim Jong-un and the opening of black markets that allowed its

GDP to rise rather than fall in 2017, the North Korea regime is unlikely to collapse in the foreseeable future. Kim's strategy of ruling by ensuring loyalty through rewards and ruthless intimidation of opponents has secured his domestic legitimacy, and he receives international support from China's determination to keep the regime afloat (Einhorn 2017, 3). The DPRK functions under a one-man, one-party, one nation ideology; Kim Jong-un as a man is intrinsically connected with the legitimacy, structure and ideology of the government. And while it can be easy to write off Kim's rhetoric as irrational or suicidal, the DPRK leader is neither. If anything, his actions have shown an ability to calibrate his behavior to push forward aggressively on nuclear and missile testing while stopping short of actions that might incite a military response (Pak and Hass 2017, 2). Continuing to isolate and sanction North Korea from the international community, while essential for bringing North Korea to the table, also creates strong obstacles to Kim Jong-un and the DPRK's stability. Despite the international community's consensus that a collapsed North Korea is in no-one's interest, Kim Jong-un's anxiety over the security of his position will continue to color how the DPRK approaches negotiations. It will likely require significant assurances and commitments to Kim Jong-un's ability to stay in power over a sovereign state. The US and ROK should, therefore, prepare to provide assurances of North Korea's continued existence, and eventual reintegration into the international community.

Rather than simply an escalation tactic, the buildup of nuclear weapons capabilities by North Korea is a national symbol of prestige and progress, to which Kim Jong-un has pegged his personal legacy and the Kim family dynasty (Pak and Hass 2017, 2). Even with overwhelming international pressure, Kim Jong-un would be unlikely to abandon altogether what he sees as the primary deterrent essential to the survival of his regime (Einhorn 2017, 2).

### **A Turning Point?**

Kim Jong-un's 2018 New Year's address declared that the North had completed its nuclear weapons development, saying: "Our republic is finally in possession of a strong and reliable war deterrent that cannot be reversed by any power, anything." (NCNK 2018). Some have interpreted Kim's speech as proof of the conflicting positions of the US and DPRK; an immovable North Korea committed to maintaining its nuclear deterrent, and a US that is unwilling to accept a nuclearized North Korea under any circumstances (Revere 2018, 10). But Kim Jong-un's frequent mention of the country's "harshest-ever challenges" and "difficult conditions caused by life-threatening sanctions and containment" indicate that the sanctions imposed by the international community are truly beginning to have negative effects on the regime. While sanctions have the explicit goal of pushing Kim Jong-un to denuclearize, he continues to tout self-reliance and an expansion of the WMD program: "The nuclear weapons research sector and the rocket industry should mass produce nuclear warheads" (NCNK 2018). While sanctions are pushing Kim Jong-un to a precipice, policy-makers in Seoul and Washington should make sure they push it towards denuclearization and away from escalation. US-ROK policy should base itself on tactics that bring North Korea to the table, rather than

backing it into a corner. Based on the above evidence, and the importance North Korea places on its nuclear program, sanctions alone won't force Kim Jong-un to total denuclearization without some form of reciprocity, assurances, or positive engagement.

The policy set forward by the US and ROK included no opportunity for positive inducements for cooperation until North Korea started with a freeze of its program, which Kim Jong-un unexpectedly announced in March. Following the symbolic gestures of the 2018 Winter Olympics, and the increasing dialogue between the ROK and DPRK, Kim Jong-un announced the freeze of nuclear and missile tests in exchange for a meeting with President Trump. The announcement came on the heels of the North Korean delegation's visit to the Blue House, and the announcement of an inter-Korean summit in April 2018. The ROK should acknowledge this as a significant step forward. Having achieved the initial freeze from North Korea, increased dialogue, such as the announcement of the summit in May, is a step in the right direction. Moving forward with its "step-by-step" approach, Seoul should consider positive economic inducements it will be willing to offer its northern counterpart. The announcement on March 8, 2018 of President Trump's willingness to meet with Kim Jong-un marked a decisive shift in US policy; direct talks between the two leaders would be the first meeting between an incumbent US leader and his North Korean counterpart. While past analyses have suggested negotiation of a freeze-for-freeze between the US and the DPRK, exchanging a freeze of North Korean tests in exchange for US suspending military exercises and deployments, Kim Jong-un unilaterally announced the freeze of nuclear and missile tests in exchange for a meeting with President Trump. Previous North Korean leaders have expressed willingness to meet with US presidents and "put denuclearization on the table," however, this is the first time in US history where the President has accepted the invitation. Moving forward, how the US balances its current maximum pressure, maximum opportunity strategy will be critical to any chances for denuclearization. The US should work closely with the ROK to coordinate their strategies for bilateral engagement, as well as Japan, China and Russia to allow the US to make credible commitments. Building a bipartisan US delegation of experts will also be essential (International Crisis Group March 2018). A strong, bipartisan delegation would not only allow Trump to draw upon expertise but will help mitigate the historic flip-flopping of strategy between administrations, and this can build bipartisan support in Congress in case of a future treaty. Future engagement with North Korea will require significant preparation both domestically in the US and internationally with its allies to create a realistic and consistent strategy.

Kim Jong-un is more likely to negotiate in good faith and agree to credible commitments if he believes it will result in an improvement, rather than deterioration, of his overall security interests. As economic security is an essential component of overall national security, offering positive economic inducements in exchange for steps to denuclearize could buffer North Korea's anxiety over losing its nuclear deterrent. By publicly stating that the North Korean people would "never again have to tighten their belts" in his New Year's address, Kim Jong-un has tied his legitimacy to economic development (Babson 2015, 8). In addition

to cooperation between North and South Korea, multilateral support for economic inducements is necessary to producing coherent policy among North Korea's neighbors.

Selective removal of sanctions would play an important role in any positive inducement strategy, as sanctions are the primary obstacle to North Korea's outward economic development and integration into the international financial system. With the official toleration of markets, North Korea's economy now relies heavily on market economic activity in addition to state-directed activity. Allowing for a reduction in sanctions would offer North Korea the opportunity to attract foreign direct investment, engage in international trade, and participate in legal rather than illicit finance.

The US has roughly 25,000 active-duty personnel stationed in South Korea (Balik 2017). Every year, the US and South Korea conduct joint exercises to test the ability of the Joint Combined Forces in operations such as the movement of military assets, stability operations, ground maneuver operations, and combat air operations (Tokola n.d.). North Korea in the past considered the joint exercises an act of aggression from the United States and ROK that signals preparations for invasion (Kim and Shin 2018). The Foal Eagle/Key Resolve exercises were postponed for the duration of the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, but a further postponement of the exercises could constitute an essential measure in getting North Korea to take steps to denuclearize. The US- ROK military leaders could even consider adjustments to scale, timing, or location of planned exercises that could reduce their perceived threat to the DPRK (Einhorn 2017, 4).

One of the three goals of Moon Jae-In's policy is the creation of a New Economic Community on the Korean Peninsula, which would promote inter-Korean economic cooperation. The New Economic Community would include conducting joint projects across different sectors, and would involve China, Russia, and the Northeast Asian countries (Ministry of Unification 2017, 22). Integration of the DPRK into regional economic communities would not only relieve some of its insecurities, but would make future military provocations more costly.

## **Conclusion**

The current US strategy of "maximum pressure" may stifle the North Korean economy but is likely not sufficient to achieve denuclearization. Kim Jong-un and the DPRK have shown impressive staying power thus far, and with China's commitment to a stable North Korea, Kim Jong-un is not yet desperate to concede to any demands for reducing his nuclear capabilities without significant security assurances and economic incentives. Historically, the US and ROK have had truncated, inconsistent policies towards North Korea, hindering their ability to commit credibly to long term policies. The current US, ROK and Japanese policy of maximum pressure is all sticks and no carrots, and indefinite sanctions without positive incentives for compliance will not change North Korea's behavior. From Kim Jong-un's standpoint, North Korea's nuclear weapons are the regime's primary deterrent against an impending imperialist threat, and he will not give them up for nothing in return. The 2018 Winter Olympic Games

opened a new door for de-escalation, and both sides should now work for a more ambitious bilateral diplomatic process. Future negotiation strategies from the US and the ROK should consider offering incentives to cooperate, such as incremental easing of tensions, that would induce compliance and offer the legitimacy and security that Kim Jong-un currently gets from nuclear weapons.

## **Recommendations**

### To the United States

- **Build a bipartisan delegation for future negotiations with the DPRK.**
- **Begin planning for future positive economic inducements.** Policy makers should begin to think of the sequence in which they might reduce sanctions in the case of a North Korean freeze of testing. Both Trump and the White House should be prepared to offer North Korea rewards for continued steps to denuclearize, including easing or suspending sanctions incrementally.
- **Release a White House strategy on the Korean Peninsula.** A strategy document that was prepared through interagency cooperation among the Department of Defense, Department of State, Congress and the White house would allow the US to speak with one voice on its North Korean policy, and would reduce the conflicting narratives that reduce the credibility of US commitments.
- **Remove North Korea's designation as a "State Sponsor of Terrorism."** This designation only inflames tensions between the US and DPRK, and limits negotiation opportunities that could improve relations.
- **Continue to utilize Congress to legislate policy on North Korea.** The sanctions bill, like the one passed by Congress in 2016, would provide policy continuity beyond individual presidential terms and would offer more assurances of commitment from the US that have been lacking in the past. Ratification of formal treaties between the two states in the future will signal a credible commitment by the US to the DPRK.

### To the Republic of Korea

- **The ROK should accept the freeze of nuclear and missile testing** as a sufficient step forward by the DPRK to justify a reciprocal postponement of US-ROK joint exercises.
- **Continue with bilateral diplomatic engagements, including the inter-Korean summit.**
- **Enact any future inter-Korean agreements into law.** This provides credibility to North Korea of South Korean continued compliance with any agreements made regardless of future changes in administration.
- **Reduce bilateral sanctions.** Contingent upon the continued freeze of testing by Pyongyang, South Korea should offer economic incentives to promote further steps to denuclearize from the DPRK.

- **Economic Cooperation.** With the reduction of sanctions, the **ROK should plan for joint economic ventures** that could begin to reintegrate the North Korean economy, such as the creation of the New Economic Community.



## **Lessons from Past Nuclear Negotiations: A Way Forward for Denuclearization or Past the Point of No Return?**

Sarah Hutson

In the past year it has become evident that North Korea is reaching the final stage in the development of a nuclear weapon capable of hitting the United States (US) mainland. Some experts argue that North Korea has already reached this point. Three intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests and one underground nuclear test in the last five months of 2017 led to exchanges of insults between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump as tensions heightened on the Korean peninsula. In his New Year's address on January 1, 2018, Kim stated that the regime's goal of deterring a US attack "against me and our country" has now been achieved (NCNK 2018). However, in the same speech, Kim also expressed openness to talks with South Korea. President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, a longtime supporter of engagement with the North, used this opportunity to restart inter-Korean talks during a surge of "Olympic diplomacy" in early 2018. At the time of writing, the prospects for Korean relations and US-North Korean negotiations seem positive. North Korea has stalled its nuclear testing and issued an invitation to President Trump through South Korean officials to meet with Kim Jong-un. This has, in turn, been accepted by the US administration, though details of the meeting are still to be determined.

Some in the international community have expressed hope that this thaw in relations and possibility of negotiations will be able to translate into a long-awaited peace agreement on the Korean peninsula. However, more pessimistic views hold that North Korea's moves toward openness are not sincere and that instead the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is attempting to drive a wedge between the US and South Korea or to buy time to complete an ICBM. Despite President Trump's acceptance of talks with the North without preconditions, the Trump administration has also at times reiterated the US position that in order to return to the negotiating table North Korean denuclearization must be agreed to as a precondition. Kim Jong-un has also stated contradictory positions. At times, he has said that "no force and nothing can reverse" North Korea's nuclear development, which he believes is crucial for his personal and political survival (NCNK 2018). Yet in March 2018 Kim reportedly agreed to discuss denuclearization in future bilateral talks with the US. However, what is meant by "denuclearization" is still unclear.

In many ways, the current crisis facing the region has similarities with previous periods of rising tensions in the past 25 years which led to negotiations between the US, the DPRK and other regional actors. One important response to the current situation should be to look back at previous bilateral and multilateral negotiations that attempted to address the North Korean nuclear weapons program, including the 1994 Agreed Framework and the 2003-2007 Six-Party Talks. This chapter will address how lessons learned from previous failed attempts at negotiating with North Korea can inform the current situation. By examining both sets of

previous negotiations, it is possible to identify many structural issues that ultimately led the negotiated agreements to be abandoned and any progress on denuclearization reversed. Issues including poor coordination between allies, changes in administrations, policy inconsistency, misinterpretations of the North Korean regime, and failure to follow through on agreements in a timely manner led to unsuccessful agreements in the long term. This recurrence of tensions, negotiations, and failure of agreements was aptly referred to by Jung Bong-geun of the Korean National Diplomatic Academy as a “vicious cycle of North Korean nuclear negotiations.” (SAIS group meeting, Seoul, 22 January 2018). If any future negotiations are to succeed, it is important for the US, Republic of Korea (ROK) and other parties to learn from and not repeat the errors of the past 25 years.

At the same time, it is important not to overlook the key difference between 2018 and 1994 or the early 2000s, namely that North Korean development of a nuclear weapons deterrent is no longer theoretical. According to some analysts the nuclear program is within one to two years from completion of a fully functional nuclear ICBM capable of attacking a US city (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018, 3). Others, such as James Person of the US-Korea Institute, believe that this nuclear milestone has already been reached and the country is therefore no longer willing to negotiate away its nuclear deterrent (SAIS Group Meeting, Washington DC, 16 November 2017). Therefore, it is also important to consider whether we have passed the “point of no return” on North Korea’s nuclear development and, if so, how should the policies and the negotiation strategies of the parties change to reflect the new reality?

### **Lessons Learned from the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks**

The negotiations that led to the Agreed Framework were undertaken in the shadow of the 1993-94 North Korean nuclear crisis. In March 1993, North Korea formally began the process to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in response to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) pressure for special inspections to investigate inconsistencies in its nuclear facilities (Jackson 2016, 146). While also using coercive sanctions and military threats, President Clinton appointed Robert Gallucci to conduct bilateral US-DPRK talks despite concerns from some in the Department of Defense that direct negotiations would reward North Korea for its behavior (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 221). Negotiations stalled after the second round due to threats from North Korea to turn Seoul into a “sea of fire” (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 238). However, after a breakthrough unofficial meeting between former President Jimmy Carter and Kim Il-sung in June 1994, the Agreed Framework was concluded on October 22, 1994. The agreement’s main provisions included a promise from North Korea that it would freeze its nuclear program immediately and eventually dismantle it; the construction of two light water reactors by the Korean Economic Development Organization (KEDO); and an agreement by the US to supply the North with 500,000 tons of heavy heating oil each year until the light water reactors were completed (Buszynski 2013, 20). However, only eight years later the Agreed Framework was discarded by the US under President George W. Bush. The Bush

administration broke off contact with North Korea, labeled the regime as a state sponsor of terrorism and abandoned the Agreed Framework after intelligence reports highlighted North Korea's secret uranium enrichment programs (Buszynski 2013, 24). Despite the fact that the Agreed Framework had only covered plutonium, not uranium enrichment, the US argued that North Korea had violated the spirit of the agreement. Heavy oil deliveries and progress on the agreed light water reactors were suspended in November 2002, leading to the North disabling IAEA monitoring, ejecting inspectors and making good on its threat to leave the NPT (Buszynski 2013, 58).

In response to the crisis caused by the restarting of the North Korean nuclear program, multiparty talks were chosen as the new strategy by the Bush Administration in 2003 to avoid bilateral US-DPRK talks (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 397). China became more involved in pressuring the North Koreans to return to the negotiating table and offered its services as a mediator. South Korea and Japan were included at US insistence and Russia was also added at the request of North Korea in what would become the Six-Party Talks (Buszynski 2013, 70). From 2003 to 2007 the parties engaged in five rounds of talks. Following the fourth round, the parties concluded the September 2005 agreement, in which the US did not contest North Korea's right to peaceful nuclear energy and all parties stated that they were willing to provide energy assistance to North Korea in return for North Korea agreeing to abandon all nuclear weapons and return to the NPT and IAEA. However, this agreement also broke down due to disagreements about the timeline for the different provisions, including the provision of light water reactors, normalization of relations and withdrawal of the US threats to North Korea (Buszynski 2013, 97-99). Although in 2006 North Korea conducted ballistic missile tests and nuclear tests which led to United Nations (UN) sanctions, US-DPRK bilateral negotiations in February 2007 resulted in an agreement. This agreement was similar to the previous Agreed Framework, which the Bush administration had previously criticized, with the provision of energy and normalization of relations in return for the end of the North Korean nuclear program. However, the February 2007 agreement was short-lived, breaking down over disagreements about details and implementation amid heavy domestic criticism of the deal in the US. In August 2008, three days after the US decision not to follow through on a key provision, to remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, North Korea began reversing its implementation of the 2007 agreement. It restored the facilities at Yongbyon to full use and ejected IAEA inspectors (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 430). To date, there have been no further multilateral talks in the region, despite several attempts to revive the Six-Party Talks.

#### Engagement vs. Disengagement

The first important lesson learned from historical negotiations is that the US and other negotiating parties have consistently underestimated the staying power of the North Korean government under the Kim family. Previous US and ROK administrations believed that the Kim regime would collapse and that therefore it was not important to negotiate to achieve any

concessions from North Korea on the nuclear issue. Instead, many supporters of the Clinton and Bush administrations saw the Agreed Framework or the Six-Party Talks as a way to buy time for the Kim regime to collapse (Buszynski 2013, 21). However, despite regular predictions of collapse due to pressures from sanctions or military threats, the North Korean regime has proven itself capable of withstanding coercion and handling internal crises and two leadership transitions. At the same time, the DPRK's actions have been relatively consistent with regards to nuclear development and negotiations. Notably, in the periods before and even during the negotiations, North Korea consistently engaged in saber rattling and provocative behavior to reinforce its positions. However, during the periods while agreements were being implemented, the North Koreans did take steps to disable those nuclear programs and sites covered by the agreement. Importantly, whenever the negotiated agreements fell apart, North Korea resumed its nuclear development. In the years since the Six-Party Talks the DPRK has made significant strides in constructing new missiles and nuclear weapons. From this evidence, it is clear that the North Koreans have historically been willing to pause their nuclear weapons programs, and that negotiations have been at least somewhat successful at slowing the pace of development. Practicing strategic patience by not engaging with the North Koreans and implementing sanctions, on the other hand, does not appear to have worked to slow or stop North Korean nuclear development. Therefore, despite the rhetoric and continued provocative behavior by the North Korean side, continuing engagement has in the past been more effective than not engaging at all.

#### Policy Coordination and Consistency

Another important lesson learned from the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks is the importance of consistent, long-term policies and coordination on those policies both between allied nations and among domestic stakeholders. First, on the international stage there has been a consistent mismatch between the policies of different administrations in Washington and Seoul and a history of coordination problems that have hampered negotiations with North Korea. During the Agreed Framework negotiations, South Korean president Kim Young Sam criticized the idea of compromise with North Korea, which threatened to derail the ongoing talks (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 278). His successor Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy" of reconciliation and engagement was mismatched with George W. Bush administration's more hostile view towards North Korea, which Bush identified as part of the "Axis of Evil" (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 359). During the Six-Party Talks, the coordination problems multiplied with the players. Tensions continued between the US and the ROK under President Roh, and the US failed to effectively coordinate with China, the other key player in the negotiations. Because of this lack of coordination, the DPRK negotiators were able to exploit divisions between the parties during negotiations and move the discussions away from nuclear proliferation issues or stall for time (Buszynski 2013, 34).

Another important level needed for coordination in any negotiation is the domestic level. During the 1993-94 nuclear crisis and the negotiations for the Agreed Framework, policy

differences between the State Department and the Department of Defense and a lack of clear direction from the President delayed the negotiations at the early stages (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 220). Moreover, domestic divisions were reflected in the Agreed Framework's itself. The deal was purposefully not labeled as a treaty because President Clinton feared, correctly, that the agreement would be highly controversial among the American people and therefore had little chance of Senate ratification (Buszynski 2013, 24). Internal divisions and domestic criticism were also in effect during the Bush administration. Bush officials were partly motivated to drop the Agreed Framework due to an overarching concern with differentiating the new administration's policies from Clinton's as much as possible (Buszynski 2013, 23). During the first years of the Six-Party Talks, the US administration was internally divided on policy toward North Korea, leading to an inability to achieve policy objectives including denuclearization (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 398). The Obama administration, although initially interested in talks with North Korea, later resorted to a policy of increased sanctions and "strategic patience." And the administration of President Trump seems to be following in George W. Bush's footsteps by rejecting any plans made by his predecessor. The current US government also seems to be divided on Korea policy, with different and conflicting signals coming from the Department of State, the Vice President and the President at different times (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018, 4). Similarly, in South Korea, administration changes have led to sharp reversals of the previous government's policies towards North Korea. The so-called "South-South conflict" among political parties in South Korea is a reflection of the political polarization on the North Korean issue. Although under Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun the South Korean government had pursued various versions of a "Sunshine Policy" toward relations with North Korea, in 2008 new conservative President Lee Myung-bak was unwilling to continue the engagement policies of his predecessors. Lee cancelled a summit agreement between Roh and Kim Jong-il, and argued that his predecessors' policies had been too weak and had given too much away (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 438, 442). Lee's successor Park Geun-hye continued with a hardline policy, but this was also reversed following her impeachment and the election of President Moon in May 2017.

Changing policies every four or five years is in some ways a reality of democratic political cycles, but at the same time this policy inconsistency has harmed the credibility of the US and the ROK in negotiations with North Korea. Experts at the Sejong Institute argued that, for North Korea it is not rational to make concessions during conservative regimes but instead to wait for the administration to change to a more liberal party which is more open to engagement (SAIS group meeting, Seoul, 22 January 2018). South Korean officials at the Ministry of Unification agreed that the South Korean expert community needs to do a much better job of coming up with sustainable policies that can be accepted by both sides of the domestic political spectrum and stated that the creation of a national consensus through dialogue is a priority of the Moon administration (SAIS group meeting, Seoul, 26 January 2018). However, in the US, a bipartisan consensus on US policy on the Korean peninsula is

difficult to envision given the current polarized and rapidly evolving political environment in Washington.

### Implementation and Verification

The third important takeaway from the breakdown of both the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks is that there is a significant need for verification and timely follow through on both sides for any agreement to work long term. The Agreed Framework and the February 2007 agreement both fell through due to issues of implementation and conflicts over what provisions were contingent on which other parts of the agreements. The September 2005 agreement during the Six-Party Talks was also purposefully vague on timelines, such as when light water reactors would be discussed. Therefore, despite being hailed as a breakthrough, it was only a preliminary agreement where the details were never fully agreed on. These breakdowns were due to two factors: a lack of trust between the two sides that hampered implementation and a lack of specificity regarding how the agreement should work. Because of the complexity of the issues with North Korea and the interests of the multiple parties involved, specificity is both difficult to achieve but essential for an agreement to last. At the same time, all parties need to be committed to their side of the agreement and their commitments must be verifiable. For example, the US blames North Korea for continuing to enrich uranium under the Agreed Framework, while the North Koreans blame the US for “moving the goal posts” by slowing down the delivery of agreed to inducements and attempting to make important concessions conditional on issues outside of the agreement (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 429). According to North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan, lack of follow through by the US in removing North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism after the 2007 Agreement led North Korea to conclude that mutual cooperation was no longer a useful course of action and that the only option left was for the North to strengthen their deterrent against a US attack (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 431). Because of the pervasive lack of trust between the US, North Korea and other parties in the region, not least because of the multiple failed agreements in the past, confidence-building measures may be needed on smaller issues to enable trust on larger issues, such as security and denuclearization, as a basis for future negotiations.

### Bilateral vs. Multilateral

Lastly, another important question arising from the diplomatic experience on the Korean Peninsula since the 1990s is whether the US should engage in bilateral talks with the DPRK or adopt a multilateral approach similar to the Six-Party Talks. On one hand, there is likely more support within both the current US administration and the Kim government for direct talks between North Korea and the US. Bilateral talks for the Agreed Framework and on the sidelines of the Six-Party Talks in 2007 were effective in dealing with immediate crises and reaching results more quickly than multiple rounds of multilateral negotiations. However, bilateral talks have been considered a political risk in the past for the US because of the risk of failure and the unwillingness to be seen to be rewarding North Korea by elevating it to an equal

footing with the US. And in the current situation, the announced US-DPRK bilateral talks are also unlikely to happen if the US government restates a position that North Korea must agree to give up its nuclear program as a precondition for returning to the negotiating table.

However, it is unclear whether multilateral negotiations would be preferable in this case. Based on past experience with the Six-Party Talks and other attempts at multilateral negotiations in the region, multilateral talks are slower, much harder to manage and more likely to result in vague agreements in order to satisfy many competing interests. However, certain long-term benefits from a negotiated settlement, such as enhancing regional security and economic cooperation, are not feasible without buy-in from the important regional players. History shows that accounting for the interests of South Korea and China is particularly important. The South Korean government, for example, envisions itself as a participant, or possibly as a “corridor” or “channel” that will be able to facilitate the resumption of bilateral negotiations between the US and North Korea (SAIS Group Meetings, Seoul, 26 January 2018). This strategy is evident in recent events where South Korean officials delivered an invitation to negotiate from Kim to Trump. However, absent significant strides and trust building with the North, South Korea would likely not be able to serve as a credible facilitator or mediator that would be mutually acceptable to both sides, leaving South Korea’s role in direct US-DPRK talks in question. At the same time, some South Koreans worry about the potential for the current US administration to engage in “Korea passing,” or to negotiate with the DPRK without consulting them as allies (SAIS Group Meeting, Washington DC, 16 November 2017). These concerns could cause South Korea to act independently and possibly harm the likelihood of a successful agreement between the US and North Korea. However, in the case of China, chilly relations between Beijing and Pyongyang, and heightened regional competition, especially between the US and China, may make multilateral talks less useful than direct talks in the current situation. At the same time, China also has the ability to spoil a deal that is contrary to its interests and has a long-term interest in regional security. Therefore, while it is likely that bilateral US-DPRK negotiations have the best chance of a breakthrough in the short term, the other parties must be consulted. Formal multilateral negotiations similar to the Six-Party Talks may be useful in the region in the future once the immediate issues between the US and the DPRK have been addressed or to assist with implementation and verification of any agreement, as well as for long term aims such as regional security cooperation.

### **Divergence from Past Negotiations and the Point of No Return**

While it is useful to analyze previous negotiations in order to stop the “vicious cycle” of nuclear negotiations on the Korean peninsula, today’s nuclear crisis may also diverge from previous negotiations. Specifically, there is an open question whether the end goal of a denuclearized Korean peninsula is even possible under the Kim Jong-un regime. Despite Kim’s reported willingness to negotiate about denuclearization, this reversal of previous rhetoric leads to questions about whether he means abandonment of all nuclear capabilities, as the US and its

allies envision, or some lesser form of denuclearization. According to Kim Jong-dae of the South Korean National Assembly, some Korean experts believe that Kim's recent engagement is a manifestation of his confidence arising from possession of a nuclear deterrent (SAIS Group Meeting, Seoul, 23 January 2018). Therefore, is North Korea still interested in using nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip or, instead, as has been expressed in Track II negotiations, being recognized as a nuclear state (SAIS Group Meeting Washington DC, December 2017)?

Whether the "point of no return" has passed or not, it is likely in any case that the DPRK's negotiating strategy will be different now that North Korea is at a final stage of development of nuclear weapons and an ICBM capable of striking the mainland US. Now that Kim Jong-un has declared that North Korea possesses a nuclear deterrent, there is a strong possibility that full denuclearization is no longer on the table unless regime security can be otherwise guaranteed. In past negotiations, the negotiating parties underestimated the will of the North Koreans to obtain nuclear capabilities, even when agreements were in effect. The North Koreans' behavior while the Agreed Framework was in force implies that even then the regime perceived nuclear weapons as key to its security interests and was not willing to give them up completely. This perception is likely to only have been strengthened by the history of failed agreements and the experience of other states such as Libya and Iraq after they gave up their deterrents. Overall, while Kim Jong-un perceives the country and regime's survival to be under threat, agreeing to give up nuclear weapons is highly unlikely.

Experts and policymakers do not agree whether the "point of no return" has passed for a nuclear North Korea or, if it has, what the appropriate policy response should be. Many parties including Japan, the South Korean defense ministry and the United States object vehemently to the notion of accepting a North Korea with nuclear weapons capability. To date, the ROK, US, and Japanese governments have yet to formally consider policy options to deal with a nuclear North Korea (SAIS Group Meetings Seoul, January 2018). The issue is politically charged for politicians in all concerned countries, so it is possible that discussions are happening privately. In general, however, if the DPRK is not willing to denuclearize completely, the parties must consider changing their thinking about what they are willing to accept as the nuclear status-quo in the region. If there is any willingness from the DPRK to negotiate regarding denuclearization, the Kim regime will likely need a face-saving solution to be able to back away from its rhetoric, and even then North Korea will likely only accept a deal if the country's interests for security are met. Therefore the US needs to test the viability of options to assuage the DPRK's security concerns in the long term. Debates about whether we have passed an artificial "point of no return" should not stop the policy planning process or stop the US and others from engaging with North Korea. In any case, it will be difficult to accurately assess North Korea's interests, requests and willingness to offer concessions if there are no talks at all.

To prepare for all contingencies, the government of the US should look to cases beyond the Korean peninsula, including deterrence, arms control and reduction negotiations during the Cold War. Creative solutions that would allow Kim Jong-un to meet his core interests should

also be explored, such as face-saving agreements and middle solutions. A freeze for freeze option, where North Korea freezes its nuclear testing in return for a freeze on US-ROK military exercises, is one such option. Another option may be to look to a diplomatic middle solution similar to the US “One China” policy. Can the US give tacit acceptance of “one Korea” or “a right to energy independence” in exchange for a significant but not total reduction in nuclear weapons programs? While many of these ideas may not work in practice and it may be difficult to change the thinking on the issue of nuclear proliferation, the reality is that denuclearization is likely a long-term goal, if it is possible at all. Therefore, if there are ways to live with a nuclear North Korea at least in the short term and diffuse the possibility of war, these options should at least be considered.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, it is important to learn from past negotiations with North Korea, including the talks that resulted in the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks. These bilateral and multilateral negotiations had both successes and failures that are relevant to the current nuclear crisis. The most salient point is that in the past 25 years, the periods of negotiation and implementation of negotiated agreements are the only times when the North Korean regime has reversed or slowed their nuclear development. Thus, negotiation has had some success in moving towards denuclearization where strategies such as lack of engagement, sanctions and strategic patience have not. The current US administration can improve its policy coordination within the US government and with other countries, especially South Korea and China. It is also important to recognize the lack of trust on both sides resulting from previous policy reversals and failed negotiations on the nuclear issue. Therefore, the US and the DPRK must both commit to trust-building measures in the short term, and strong verification to ensure that both sides follow through on their commitments in any agreements. Although multilateral negotiations would not be as effective as bilateral US-DPRK negotiations at the current time, input and support from regional actors including South Korea, China, Russia and Japan will be key to success. In the longer term, multilateral negotiations similar to the Six-Party Talks could be used to improve overall regional security if preceded by bilateral agreements on the Korea Peninsula. At the same time, it is also important to look past the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks to plan for the contingency that North Korea has changed its stance on complete denuclearization or using nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip. If so, policy planners should still prepare to negotiate to achieve progress in the short term and explore more creative ways to meet the long-term security interests of the US, North Korea and other parties in the region.

### **Recommendations**

#### To the Government of the United States

- **Establish internal bipartisan working groups** to determine a consistent North Korea policy across all departments and branches of government.

- Prepare to **negotiate bilaterally with North Korea**. Drop demands for preconditions to any talks with the DPRK. Determine what concessions, side payments and other “carrots” the US is willing to offer in exchange for North Korea’s agreement on the nuclear issue.
- **Seek input from Korea and Northeast Asia regional experts** on negotiation strategies.
- Any communications or future negotiations should seek to **uncover and address the root causes for why the North Korean government wants to obtain nuclear weapons**. In the short term, work with the ROK to investigate North Korea’s updated positions, interests and meaning of denuclearization from the North Korean perspective.
- Pay attention not only to securing a summit or bilateral agreement, but also **focus resources on the implementation of any deal**. Failure to follow through on any future deal will further undermine security in the region and damage US credibility.
- **Clearly communicate policy options and coordinate with allies and regional stakeholders**. During bilateral negotiations, seek the support of a multilateral group of stakeholders, including the members of the previous Six-Party Talks.

To the Government of the ROK

- **Continue bilateral negotiations with the DPRK** and adopt a facilitating role for future US-DPRK negotiations.
- **Coordinate with the US government** on goals and strategies for negotiations.
- Continue efforts to **forge a consensus policy among political actors** of multiple parties, departments and branches of government.
- **Gauge public opinion on policy options** and to sell any negotiated deal to the South Korean people.

To the Governments of Japan, PRC, and Russia

- **Support bilateral negotiations between the US and the DPRK**.
- In the medium to long term, **engage the US, DPRK and ROK in multilateral talks** to improve greater regional security.

## **United Nations and Global Non-Proliferation Practices: Lessons from the NPT and Other Multilateral Treaties**

Scott Sloat

Actions taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) since the 1950s have had enormous implications for international arms control regimes and global non-proliferation efforts. The DPRK's long-standing nuclear weapons program has undermined the credibility of essential multilateral treaties and the global norms that these treaties are intended to protect. The DPRK's more recent advancements in ballistic missiles, as well as chemical and biological weapons, pose additional challenges to United Nations (UN)-led non-proliferation and disarmament measures. Since discussions of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula tend to center on negotiations between a limited number of parties involved in the conflict, the potential consequences for the broader international community are often neglected.

Of particular importance is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Since its entry into force on 5 March 1970, the NPT has been at the center of a global regime that has enabled its 191 States Parties to make significant progress in the treaty's three "pillars": non-proliferation, disarmament and the promotion of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The NPT has become the gold standard for global arms control, particularly in regard to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Nevertheless, the DPRK's acquisition of WMDs and ballistic missiles could initiate a regional domino-effect, in which South Korea, Japan and other actors in Northeast Asia follow suit. The NPT and global WMD control regimes, as well as the interests of their States Parties, are directly at stake.

Any negotiations with North Korea must center on bringing the DPRK back under the NPT and potentially under other treaties that include the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Moreover, it is important to apply lessons learned from these agreements in any potential negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) or a legally-binding treaty on negative security assurances (NSAs). These instruments could, in turn, promote denuclearization of the DPRK. To achieve these goals, it is important to begin by carefully reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the NPT as exposed by events on the Korean Peninsula.

### **Lessons from the NPT**

North Korea, India, Pakistan and presumably Israel, all have been able to develop nuclear weapons after the NPT's entry into force in 1970. Although India, Pakistan and Israel never signed the NPT, North Korea was a State Party from 12 December 1985 until 10 January 2003. It remains to this day the only State Party to withdraw from the treaty. Considering this situation, as well as the fact that North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests since 2006, it seems clear that the NPT has failed in its purpose. However, a number of scholars point to what the treaty has been able to achieve in order to contend that it has, in fact, succeeded to a

certain degree in the case of North Korea. Some claim that although the NPT did not stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, it has disrupted the country's imports of nuclear technologies. Because of this, the NPT has slowed North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile development and has raised the cost of these programs (Ku 2017, 189).

It is believed that Pyongyang today could have an arsenal of more than one hundred nuclear weapons, but because of the NPT, it now only has enough fissile materials for 16 to 32 additional bombs (Hecker 2010, 48; Hecker 2017). Just as importantly, the NPT has proven itself as an important legal mechanism to punish violators. Under the NPT system, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is required to report violations of the treaty to the UN Security Council. Accordingly, North Korea's nuclear tests prompted the imposition of broad economic sanctions through Security Council Resolutions 1718, 1874, 2094 and 2270 (Ku 2017, 188).

Despite the NPT's modest achievements in the case of North Korea, it is just as important to assess the weaknesses of the treaty in order to take an effective course of action moving forward. According to Yangmo Ku of Norwich University, North Korea was able to develop nuclear weapons by taking advantage of certain weak elements of the NPT. These include the IAEA safeguards system, the lack of constraints on nuclear technology transfers, and the treaty's withdrawal clause (Ku 2017, 180). Other issues for the NPT's viability include an inadequate enforcement mechanism and an increasing reliance on nuclear weapons by the United States (US) and its allies.

Under Article III of the NPT, all non-nuclear weapons States Parties are required to sign a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) with the IAEA. CSAs stipulate that NPT States Parties must declare the type and quantity of nuclear material subject to safeguards. The IAEA has the authority not only to verify that the state's declaration is complete and correct, but also to verify that the state's nuclear material is not diverted for nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices. Although North Korea signed the NPT in 1985, it did not sign the required CSA until after the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was agreed upon in 1992. Because of the delay period, North Korea was able to acquire enough fissile materials to produce several nuclear weapons (Ku 2017, 183). Even after North Korea signed the CSA, it prevented IAEA inspectors from accessing nuclear facilities that the country had not initially declared.

Due to clear deficiencies of the IAEA safeguards system, as exposed by the cases of North Korea and Iraq, the IAEA Board of Governors approved the Model Additional Protocol as part of a safeguards improvement plan known as "Program 93+2." Adopted on 15 May 1997, the Model Additional Protocol aimed to tighten the issue of undeclared nuclear facilities "in order to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the safeguards system as a contribution to global nuclear non-proliferation objectives" (IAEA 1997, Foreword). The Model Additional Protocol expanded the IAEA's ability to seek out clandestine nuclear facilities by inspecting any facility, whether or not it has been declared. Nevertheless, since

NPT States Parties are not required to accept the agreement, North Korea was never subjected to the strengthened safeguards measure.

The case of North Korea has also demonstrated that the NPT has been inadequate in preventing the transfer of export-controlled materials and equipment between states. Owing to restraints from the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) established in the late 1980s, Pakistan could no longer rely on China as a supplier for its long-range ballistic missiles. Instead, it entered a deal with North Korea in which the DPRK would trade ballistic missile parts to Pakistan in return for gas centrifuge designs and machinery that it needed to make highly-enriched uranium. This secretive trade was conducted by Abdul Qadeer Khan, Pakistan's top nuclear scientist, from the mid-1990s until news of the deal was confirmed in February 2004. Although Pakistan was under no legal obligations as a non-signatory to the NPT, North Korea, on the other hand, was exposed as a direct violator of its commitments to both the treaty and the Agreed Framework. The Khan network has led many to believe that the NPT is inadequate in preventing the transfer of critical nuclear technology (Kim and Cohen 2017, 205).

Under Article X of the NPT, a State Party "shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country." States Parties intending to withdraw from the NPT are only required to "give notice of such withdrawal to all other parties to the Treaty and to the United Nations Security Council three months in advance" (The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons 1968). In 1993, after IAEA inspectors revealed discrepancies between their own measurements of nuclear materials at Yongbyon and North Korea's official declaration, the country threatened to withdraw from the NPT via Article X. Although it repealed its decision a day before it was to come into effect, North Korea announced on 10 January 2003 that it could "no longer remain bound to the NPT" after its secret uranium enrichment programs were revealed (Carrel-Billiard and Wing 2010, 28). After expelling IAEA inspectors, the DPRK announced that it would strengthen its nuclear deterrent, and it subsequently became a *de facto* nuclear state.

The DPRK's use of the withdrawal clause exposed a number of vulnerabilities in the NPT system. First, the DPRK was able to exploit Article X during the first nuclear crisis by using the withdrawal threat as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the US. Moreover, just the fear of a withdrawal by the DPRK led the US and IAEA to delay an investigation of alleged violations so as not to undermine the upcoming 1995 NPT Review Conference (Ku 2017, 184). Most significantly, the perceived effectiveness and credibility of the NPT has been damaged as a direct result of the DPRK's withdrawal. To some observers, this action demonstrates that the NPT lacks enforcement power over a withdrawing state and that Article X grants too much protection to potentially defiant states (Kim and Cohen 2017, 205). Once a defiant state withdraws, that state can divert peaceful nuclear activities to weapons purposes relatively easily. It also has the freedom to conduct nuclear tests, as demonstrated by the DPRK.

Although the UN Security Council has taken measures in response to nuclear violations by the DPRK, it is often unable to respond adequately due to the diverging interests of the five permanent members. An example of this is when the IAEA declared that the DPRK had violated the conditions of its CSA in 2003, but China and Russia prevented the Security Council from taking immediate action. Another issue that could weaken the NPT system is the increasing reliance on nuclear weapons by the US and its allies. Wade Huntley of the Naval Postgraduate School writes that this reliance “reinforces perceptions elsewhere of the political value of nuclear weapons and devalues the global norm of nuclear non-use.” He goes on to say that “animosity towards perceived US infidelity to its NPT disarmament commitments impedes coalescence of the global unity needed to deal with problem proliferators like North Korea, and increases the difficulty of fashioning new non-discriminatory non-proliferation provisions, such as internationalization of the fuel cycle” (Huntley 2006, 740).

### **The NPT Moving Forward**

The issue of nuclear proliferation on the Korean Peninsula could have irreparable consequences for the future of the global non-proliferation regime if there are no serious efforts made to strengthen the NPT. Robert Gallucci, the chief US negotiator of the 1994 Agreed Framework, notes that there has been more discussion in Japan and South Korea about rethinking their NPT status and possibly acquiring nuclear weapons. Continued nuclear and ballistic missile tests by the DPRK, as well as US allies’ uncertainties about American protection, could trigger a domino effect in which States Parties pull out of the NPT to develop their own nuclear capabilities. Gallucci fears that an even more important issue with respect to North Korea is the transfer of missiles, and possibly even nuclear materials, to other states (Gallucci 2014, 162).

Recognizing the grave implications of the DPRK’s nuclear development for the global non-proliferation regime, there remains the vital question of what to do next. The cases of North Korea and Iraq have demonstrated that additional measures are needed to address the flaws in the IAEA safeguards system. Although the Model Additional Protocol was a meaningful step towards strengthening this system, it faces difficult hurdles to becoming a legally-binding requirement. Most developed states believe that the Model Additional Protocol should become the standard of the NPT and a requirement for the supply of nuclear materials, but developing states tend to support it solely as a voluntary measure (Harvey 2010, 6). In order to strengthen IAEA safeguards in a meaningful way, it will require the developed states to convince NPT States Parties that the CSA is not sufficient on its own for verification. By giving the Model Additional Protocol legally-binding status, it would be much more difficult for the DPRK to carry out clandestine nuclear activities if it is ever brought back under the NPT.

Like the IAEA safeguards system, the illicit transfer of nuclear materials and technologies is an issue that can be addressed with additional measures. The exposure of the Khan network prompted several proposals for ways to supply enriched uranium to states that

do not wish to develop their own enrichment capabilities. One possible arrangement could be an internationally-operated “fuel bank,” but several states are concerned that this sort of concept risks infringing on the sovereign right of states to develop nuclear technology on their own, for peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, as with the case of Iran, the concept of an internationally-operated fuel bank would influence any future negotiations by removing the DPRK’s ability to claim that it needs domestic enrichment facilities for peaceful nuclear activities.

An additional issue that needs to be addressed is the NPT’s withdrawal provision under Article X, which has generated a great deal of debate among States Parties. A range of proposals have centered on preventing the abuse of Article X and ensuring that nuclear material acquired by an NPT State Party for peaceful purposes is not later diverted for nuclear weapons programs in the event of a withdrawal. While some states push for a more active role for the UN Security Council in responding to an NPT withdrawal, others advocate for handling the issue in an extraordinary meeting of NPT States Parties. The US has proposed a wide range of actions to dissuade States Parties from abusing Article X and has asserted that they should not be able to benefit from violating the NPT and subsequently withdrawing from the treaty. These actions include prompt measures by the UN Security Council and the IAEA (Harvey 2010, 32).

The US and other countries have promoted the continued safeguarding of nuclear material of a withdrawing state as well as amending or supplementing Article X with conditions that would oblige a withdrawing state to return nuclear material and technology to suppliers (Harvey 2010, 32). François Carrel-Billiard of the International Peace Institute, and Christine Wing of NYU’s Center on International Cooperation, note two concerns about conditions such as these. First, the effectiveness of these conditions would depend to a large degree on how much the withdrawing state relied on external support for the development of its nuclear weapons program. Second, there is great reluctance within the international community to amend or supplement the NPT, for fear of a slippery slope in which other articles in the treaty could also become subjected to changes. One possible solution could be to establish measures that are related to, but do not necessarily modify, Article X (Carrel-Billiard and Wing 2010, 31-32).

The international community has struggled to address the current status of the DPRK within the NPT system. Although the DPRK made it clear in 2003 that it was exercising its right to withdraw under Article X, the UN Security Council has been reluctant to acknowledge it for several reasons. First, if the DPRK is brought back under the NPT, it may be better for the integrity of the treaty that the international community never officially recognized the withdrawal in the first place. This would allow the international community to avoid having to make a difficult decision as to how it should respond to an officially-acknowledged withdrawal. Second, by avoiding the precedent of an officially-acknowledged withdrawal of a former NPT State Party that now possesses nuclear weapons, the international community could protect the NPT from losing additional States Parties who may now see it as acceptable

to follow the DPRK's lead. Third, some observers contend that, by officially acknowledging the DPRK's withdrawal from the NPT, the international community would be giving the DPRK a bargaining chip in any future negotiations (Carrel-Billiard and Wing 2010, 31). For these reasons, it seems likely that the international community will continue to promote an ambiguous status for the DPRK within the NPT system.

Now that the DPRK has acquired nuclear weapons, many observers are pessimistic about the prospects of denuclearization. Wade Huntley contends that the next best option to rolling back the DPRK's nuclear weapons acquisition is to take measures to prevent the domino effect. He says this can be done by building better international cooperation and regional security mechanisms, as well as global non-proliferation compliance. An attempt at taking these steps was made by the Bush administration in 2003 with the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a global effort aiming to stop the proliferation of WMDs by interdicting shipments of concern. Huntley contends that states can enhance the effectiveness of *ad hoc* initiatives like the PSI by linking them "more directly to established NPT compliance mechanisms." Such linkages are vital for nuclear containment on the Korean Peninsula and even for achieving greater cooperation with China (Huntley 2006, 728-729).

Perhaps just as important as non-proliferation is the NPT pillar of nuclear disarmament. Nuclear-weapon-possessing states are obliged to take concrete steps towards fulfilling their Article VI disarmament commitments. The US and the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council cannot expect the DPRK to come back under the NPT if they are not following through on their own treaty commitments. By taking meaningful steps in nuclear disarmament, the US would demonstrate its commitment to the NPT's pillars and set an example for the DPRK to follow. It could also reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula and give the US greater leverage in any future negotiations with the DPRK.

### **The Potential of Other Multilateral Treaties**

The NPT is widely considered the "cornerstone" of the global WMD non-proliferation regime. However, there are other treaties that could greatly strengthen this regime and enable the NPT to help stabilize the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

#### The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1996, but has not entered into force because it is yet to be ratified by eight states: the DPRK, India, Pakistan, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the US. Negotiations have been challenging because of the issues of scope, on-site inspections, monitoring, verification, and conditions for the CTBT's entry into force (Ku 2017, 188). Although all five NPT nuclear-weapon-possessing states have instituted unilateral moratoria on testing, the continued underground tests by the DPRK highlight the importance of the CTBT's entry into force.

It is widely believed that the treaty's entry into force would greatly strengthen the NPT regime's credibility. Sung Chull Kim of Seoul National University, and Michael D. Cohen of

Macquarie University, point to the great impact of the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) to make the case that the CTBT, if ratified by China and the US, would have a great constraining effect on North Korean underground nuclear tests. According to them, “Whereas the NPT regime reveals its weakness in the front end of nuclear weapon development, the CTBT will be able to supplement these weaknesses in the back end and to limit and delay, if not stop, their nuclear advancement” (Kim and Cohen 2017, 205). They state that although North Korea does not care about legal provisions, the CTBT would delegitimize the position of states that are relatively tolerant of the DPRK’s nuclear testing (Kim and Cohen 2017, 206).

#### The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

The DPRK is believed to have large stocks of chemical weapons, chemical precursors for the production of chemical and biological weapons, as well as an infrastructure capable of producing large quantities of nerve, blood, blister and choking agents. It has not signed the CWC or acknowledged its possession of chemical weapons. The US believes that the DPRK would use chemical weapons in combat and that it has the capability of delivering these weapons by ballistic missiles, conventional artillery or aircraft (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, and Rajkumar 2005, 288-289). Considering the recent precedent set by Syria’s use of chemical weapons, the threat posed by the DPRK is serious and must be addressed as a part of wider non-proliferation efforts. Any future negotiations should therefore involve the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and address the issue of bringing the DPRK under the CWC.

#### The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)

Although the DPRK has not signed the CWC, it has signed the BTWC. This is a serious issue because it is believed that North Korea has been seeking to acquire biological weapons since the 1960s and is now in possession of a rudimentary biological weapon stockpile. Though not as advanced as its other weapons programs, the DPRK’s biological weapons program could involve agents such as anthrax and cholera (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, and Rajkumar 2005, 289). In addition to these agents, the BTWC bans delivery systems to disseminate them. Although it has established numerous confidence-building measures (CBMs), the treaty has no formal verification mechanism or implementation body, thereby enabling states like the DPRK to commit blatant violations. Since the BTWC stipulates that states shall cooperate on compliance issues, it is important that the DPRK’s noncompliance to the treaty is addressed in any bilateral or multilateral negotiations moving forward.

#### The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

The recently adopted TPNW is unlikely to play a significant role in resolving the nuclear standoff on the Korean Peninsula. None of the six main stakeholder states to the conflict have signed the treaty, and some have even expressed concern that it could undermine the global

non-proliferation regime established by the NPT. Nevertheless, in the long-term, the TPNW could play a role if it successfully pressures the NPT nuclear weapon states to follow through on their Article VI nuclear disarmament commitments.

#### The Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)

The NPT States Parties have expressed a great deal of support for the negotiation of a verifiable FMCT. The basic objective of this treaty would be to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. States Parties would accept verification on nuclear facilities and commit not to use any fissile material that is subject to verification for the development of nuclear weapons (Carlson 2005). Despite the widespread support for the FMCT, the 65-member Conference on Disarmament (CD), which includes India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan, has failed to agree on its broader work program. All five NPT nuclear weapon states, except for China, have declared unilateral moratoria on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

It is widely believed that the NPT could be used as a model for a FMCT. Moreover, many point to IAEA safeguards to suggest that a verification regime for the FMCT does not need to be created from scratch. It has been suggested that negotiations on such a treaty could follow the precedent set by the NPT, which is to include the political commitments in a primary treaty and establish the verification system in secondary agreements such as CSAs. According to John Carlson of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), “This approach separates the largely political from largely technical subject matters and allows for an adaptable verification system” (Carlson 2005). Ultimately, this treaty could be crucial for constraining the DPRK’s plutonium production and uranium enrichment program.

#### Negative Security Assurances (NSAs)

In addition to the FMCT, many states advocate for the negotiation of an internationally legally-binding instrument on negative security assurances (NSAs). However, China is the only nuclear-weapon state that supports this position, and it was the only state to issue an unconditional non-binding NSA through the UN in 1995. Russia would support a treaty in this regard, but wants it to include exceptions. France, on the other hand, believes that NSAs are best extended through nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs), as established by such regional agreements as the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty of Pelindaba (Harvey 2010, 27).

Considering the fact that China, Russia and the DPRK possess nuclear weapons, a Northeast Asia NWFZ would not be feasible in the short term. However, an internationally legally-binding treaty on NSAs could promote engagement in the region and help to ease tensions. In the long term, if the DPRK were to give up its nuclear weapons, legally-binding NSAs could help bolster its confidence in regime survival without having to rely on nuclear weapons. This could be achieved either through a universal treaty on NSAs or a treaty establishing a NWFZ for Northeast Asia.

## Conclusion

Successful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will require political solutions as well as strong technical mechanisms. The peace process must therefore incorporate efforts by the international community and place a strong emphasis on multilateral non-proliferation agreements. Lessons from the NPT and other multilateral treaties should be carefully applied in order to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and negotiate any future agreements. A peaceful outcome on the Korean Peninsula will depend on a strong and reinvigorated norm against the proliferation of WMDs.

## Recommendations

### To the UN

- **Promote the implementation of the “13 Practical Steps”** identified in Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.
- **Establish a formal verification mechanism and implementation body for the BTWC.** Since the DPRK is still a State Party, it is bound to its commitments.
- **Use the NPT as a model for negotiating a FMCT and its verification system.**
- **Promote negotiations on a legally-binding instrument on NSAs.** A treaty such as this would help to build the DPRK’s confidence in regime survival without needing to rely on a nuclear deterrent.

### To the NPT States Parties

- **Give the Model Additional Protocol legally-binding status.** This would help to strengthen the IAEA safeguards system and prevent the DPRK from conducting clandestine nuclear activities if it is ever brought back under the NPT.
- **Establish measures that are related to (but do not amend) Article X** in order to promote the continued safeguarding of nuclear material of a withdrawing state and oblige that state to return nuclear material and technology to suppliers.
- **Maintain a status of ambiguity for the DPRK within the NPT system.**
- **Link *ad hoc* initiatives like the PSI directly to NPT compliance mechanisms.**

### To the US

- **Take meaningful steps towards nuclear disarmament.** This would demonstrate a strong commitment to the NPT’s pillars and set an example for the DPRK.
- **Take the necessary steps to ratify the CTBT.** This would have a constraining effect on underground nuclear testing by the DPRK and delegitimize the position of states that are relatively tolerant of its nuclear testing.
- **Consult closely with the IAEA and the OPCW in any future negotiations.**
- **Promote the concept of an internationally-operated fuel bank in any future negotiations.** This would remove the DPRK’s ability to claim that it needs domestic enrichment facilities for peaceful nuclear activities.



## Unification of the Two Koreas

Trang Thi Quynh Dang

*Die Welt*, a popular daily newspaper in West Germany, did not recognize the East German state until 1989 because its editors assumed that the regime would soon collapse (Foa and Mounk 2016). However, as no signs of such a change were made clear to them, in August 1989, for the first time, *Die Welt* finally removed the quotation marks around the German Democratic Republic (GDR). One year later, in October 1990, the GDR dissolved itself, marking the reunification of the two German states and surprising numerous observers at that time. In the same vein, many policy makers, academics and commoners now also have little faith in Korean unification. As the political, social, and economic gap seems to widen over time and younger generations in South Korea show less enthusiasm for unification, it is understandable that skepticism remains. This paper will examine the possibility of unification by looking at the political, historical, social, and cultural factors of North Korea as well as the case studies of Germany, China and Vietnam. My goal in the paper is first to evaluate the three mainstream scenarios leading to unification. I will then explore all contributing factors to the most preferred scenario and lessons from three countries German, China and Vietnam. Finally, I will provide policy recommendations for the United States (US), South Korea and North Korea on how to facilitate unification and integration process.

### Unification Scenarios

The most popular unification scenarios are through (1) a lengthy consensual process (2) civil war and (3) regime collapse in North Korea. Considering the many stakeholders with conflicting interests involved in the process and the history of failed negotiations, the first scenario has low probability. With that said, according to North Korean defectors in our meetings, Kim Jong-un has privately expressed his admiration for the sitting US president. Recently, Kim extended his invitation to talk to Trump and although it is not the first time North Korea has tried to reach out to a US president, Trump is the first to accept (Collinson, 2018). After all, both have much in common from being narcissists, highly sensitive to criticism and controlling, owing their wealth and fame to their family or their preferences for isolationist and protectionist policies. Moreover, as Trump is facing multiple domestic scandals at the same time, namely the Russian election interference and extramarital affairs, his acceptance serves as a good distraction. Trump's unorthodox views may be the right ingredient to bring about peace and unification on the Korean peninsula. Still, the odds may not be high, given the fact that the US, its allies, China and Russia have different viewpoints towards a Korean unification. Thus, whether negotiations produce a desired outcome remains questionable. Additionally, US commitments are not credible to Kim, with the case of Libya as a strong proof of Washington's betrayal (Bandow 2015). Another mistake that North Korea learned from the case of Iraq is that without nuclear deterrence, Hussein's regime collapsed

(Masters 2017). A civil war is the least expected scenario that any party would be willing to risk. Besides its high cost and destruction, such a war may evolve into a great-power war. Some may argue that the US and China would not come to the rescue, while others cite the Korean war in 1950 as a reminder. Even back then China was a newly-established state that went through years of foreign invasion and civil wars, it was easy to assume that it would not interfere. Indeed, this was the position of many Chinese leaders, except for Mao, but Mao was so strong that he could single-handedly order Chinese forces to aid North Korea. Times have changed and China does not have such an authoritarian leader, but for certain China still prioritizes its national security and does not want a unified Korea backed by the US along its border (see chapter by Yan). Thus, the outcome would be uncertain, unless a window of opportunity presents itself and one takes action with a clear objective in a decisive way to seize victory and conclude the war before other external forces could intervene, such as in the Vietnam war. Such a black swan event is rare but not impossible. Last, but not least, the most popular scenario is unification achieved after a regime collapse in North Korea. Signals of instability preceding that regime change may not be clear, especially when North Korea has been isolated from the rest of the world, and obtaining reliable intelligence information from inside is very challenging. Similar to civil war, this abrupt event will cause social, security, and economic crises initially (see chapter by Chapman). These scenarios have not taken into account all actors' possible reaction, which will be contingent upon how the situation unfolds and how other parties act. In my opinion, the best scenario will be a peaceful unification deriving from internal pressure of North Korean people, similar to the German case. The North Korean people's perspective is the deciding factor. If they pressure the North Korean government to reconcile with South Korea and set preconditions for unification through goodwill, it would be the least destructive and dangerous way to end Korean division. However, in the worst case, this path may generate a power struggle and eventually regime collapse.

### **Contributing Factors**

In the wake of such a possible scenario, the question is whether the North Korean people may have that kind of influence over such a totalitarian government, and if they do, why an uprising has not happened. With its absolute control over all aspects of its citizens' life, North Korea is probably the only totalitarian regime today. Although the regime has shown its durability with the passage of time, it is not going to last long. First, in the absence of rule and law, the transition of power and maintenance of legitimacy will potentially lead to a political crisis. In *The Education of Kim Jong-un*, Pak pointed out that the family has a history of heart disease and explained why the two other sons of Kim Jong-il were not his succession choices (Pak 2018). Particularly, Kim Jong-nam, who was recently assassinated, appeared to have been an advocate of policy reform, market opening and capitalism, infuriating his father. The other son, Kim Jong-chul, was deemed unfit due to his feminine and soft character. Kim Jong-un was named a successor only after his elder brother fell out of favor with their father. Moreover,

Kim Jong-un does not have the same legitimacy as his father and grandfather. Being young and inexperienced, it will be difficult for him to solidify the elite coalition. Especially, after his ruthless acts of political repression towards even his family members, elite attitudes towards Kim Jong-un may change, and failure to secure their reliable support may result in his and the regime's downfall. Second, the regime's prolonged survival will depend not only on elite unity but also its peoples' obedience. Some critics may view East Asian culture as a main obstacle to popular uprisings (Zakaria 1994). I, however, agree with former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's defense of East Asian culture to some extent (Kim 1994). Peasants, the majority of the population, will submit to the rule "unless and until something happens to threaten and destroy their daily routines" (Moore 1993). Historically, starting from the Joseon dynasty, rulers adopted the Mandate of Heaven originally from China to justify their legitimacy (Kang and Lee 2006). Their rule for nearly five centuries helped shape much of contemporary Korean language, culture, norms and so on. Confucian ideals and doctrines, reinforced from this period, still have great influence and resiliency in Korea. The Mandate of Heaven was appealing to people in China and Korea for so long as it tapped their desire to worship and rely on a supernatural power. They believed it would help them solve their problems and fulfill their requests, such as improving their living standard or endowing them with resources to achieve their desired goals (Jones 2008). Although the concept may become less relevant today after the fall of imperial rulers, the basic need to worship a god-like figure remains the same, and the masses would follow anyone who could effectively respond to their needs. Another crucial aspect of this notion is that to stay in power, the ruler needs to ensure that "the country prospers and the people live in peace." Otherwise, his failure to fulfil his duties under Heaven's command, such as abject poverty or natural disasters, may induce and justify revolts against the unjust ruler. This notion is analogous to the most important feature of Western democracy: holding incumbents accountable. Obviously, this notion allows for people's rebellion, so what social and cultural factors are holding them back? I believe it is the combination of (1) difficulty in organizing a mass movement, (2) level of tolerance and obedience in North Korea, and (3) the state's manipulation of fear. If people in North Korea become less attached to state ideology and suffer from famine, corruption, illiteracy and unemployment, it is more likely uprisings will develop. Indeed, there is a history of resistance in North Korea; data collected in 2007 show that political participation was not rare in the past (Stanton 2007). However, as most protests are unarmed and not well organized, they are unlikely to convulse the totalitarian state and may lead to a more brutal suppression of dissent from Kim. Mertha's explanation for the success of some grassroots movements and policy activism in China may be relevant to explain the case of North Korea (Mertha 2008). In his book, he argues that issue framing must be resonant to the greatest number of people, but at the same time appeal to them in a personal way. Thus, finding the right frames that can attract potential recruits is not an easy task. Without social media and limited access to the Internet, it is even harder to communicate the message to the wider public in North Korea. Another challenge is that such a large-scale movement will require a lot of financial support. For a country where poverty has dominated

over 70 years and people are already accustomed to living with little income for subsistence, supporters are not likely to help finance the cause. Second, even though I agree with Kim Dae-jung that Confucian political philosophy embraces some democratic values, there is a reason that feudal lords accepted this school of thought and made it popular. Confucius emphasizes the role of obedience and defines the relation between a subordinate and his superior. Filial piety, in one's family and society, is the most important virtue that one should strive for. Particularly, within a family, one needs to honor and obey the commands of one's parents, regardless of how burdensome it may be; not to mention that the whole family will be punished for one's bad deeds. In a broader context, this instills a strong sense of endurance in the minds of North Koreans. Also, because they are not aware of how widespread the poor living conditions are in North Korea or about life outside of their country, they tend to think that they should be accustomed to this living situation. More importantly, the idea of nationalism and sacrifices for a greater cause are embedded in the education system. Finally, as Machiavelli asserts, promoting fear is the best way for a leader to acquire and maintain power (Machiavelli 2016). Kim so far has effectively employed this tactic to sustain his regime's survival. The State Security Department or secret police are dispersed everywhere to monitor its citizens' activities and communication. Under such tight surveillance and severe punishment, unauthorized gatherings are impossible, let alone uprisings. The regime also enables a neighborhood watch system, which turns people against each other, even their family. Grassroots surveillance breeds a culture of distrust, breaks social ties and hinders cooperation among the people.

Under the aforementioned circumstances, the path to Korean unification may appear challenging. Hence, it is helpful to look at how other countries succeeded or failed and draw some lessons from them.

### **Mass Opinion**

As Dahl argued, perceptions about the regime legitimacy may be the driving force to regime change (Dahl 1971). Indeed, favorable public attitudes towards unification in both East and West Germany were critical. However, unlike in North Korea, people there managed to turn it into action. Particularly, in East Germany, after a series of popular protests against the GDR such as "Monday demonstrations," the Berlin Wall collapsed along with the regime. Even now, in relatively authoritarian countries such as China and Vietnam with quite similar culture, contrary to some beliefs, their leaders consider public opinion central to policy making and implementation and this system is often called "responsive authoritarianism" (Heurlin 2016). For example, Lampton noted the explosion of the term "public opinion" in the 2000–2013 period and the fact that 51,000 firms were conducting polling in 2008 as evidence of changes in state behavior (Lampton 2014). An empirical study of the Vietnamese National Assembly by Malesky and Schuler found that delegates were responsive to the local constituents' demand (Malesky and Schuler 2010). Information, ethnic identity and economic development are three contributors to the sweeping change in politics. The internet and social networks, along with

other developments, have caused what Brzezinski called “the global political awakening” (Brzezinski 2008). North Korea tries to control access to outside information, but evidently it cannot fully control every single individual’s attempt to connect with the outside world. A survey by the Korea Institute for National Unification in 2015 shows that 97.3% of defectors agreed unification is necessary and 29.2% want to maintain the current peaceful coexistence. Interestingly, 83.3% believed that “North Korean residents would have wanted unification had they known how North Korean defectors are living in South Korea” (Kim et al. 2017). Thus, any tactic to help disseminate information into North Korea will expose its citizens to the outside world. Examples include setting up a free and long-range Wi-Fi network (SAIS Group Meeting with Song-ju Lee, Seoul, January 2018) or radio stations along the border to promote people’s awareness of their own human rights and freedom. Additionally, the social ties that bind the two Koreas still remain strong. In the aforementioned survey, “because we are the same ethnic group” was the main reason that people yearn for union. Clearly, in the case of China/Taiwan or China/Hong Kong, despite its effort to expand social and economic relations with both, a gap in a common Chinese identity has widened, especially among the youth, posing many issues to integration. With regard to economic development, the improvement in living standards and emergence of the middle-class help exert influence over public policy. In other words, if North Korea does not act to advance its people’s wellbeing, its legitimacy will be challenged and undermined. A recommendation for North Korean leaders is to follow Chinese model during Deng Xiaoping’s reign. Kim will loosen his grip on power but still maintain the current political system while simultaneously allowing market reforms. The history of China’s transition into the world’s top economy may serve as a model to convince Kim to compromise. Gradually, the marketization of the economy may result in preconditions for reunification.

### **Integration**

The German model represents the ideal unification scenario that South Korea would prefer. Starting with the stagnant economy, reduced oil supplies from Soviet and East German suppression of movements, disaffection grew into a mass movement and consequently led to the Berlin Wall collapse. In spite of such a sudden absorption of the East by the West, Germany managed to become a strong economy in Europe. This was, however, a costly integration and the impact on the socio-economic situation has been significant. Within less than 5 years preceding integration, both German states enjoyed a relatively similar GDP growth of 2-3%, but five years after that, East Germany’s growth was approximately 1.4% while West Germany had negative growth rate of -0.5% (Kwon 2009). According to a Swiss Institute for Business Cycle research, fiscal transfers in Germany during the period of 1991 to 1999 amounted to 3.6%-4.6% of GDP (Busch and Muller 2004).

Likewise, even after a unification in which the poorer North Vietnam took over South Vietnam, the country is presently among the fastest growing economies in the world and has made significant progress on poverty reduction. Integration, however, came about through the

use of force, so the cost was higher than in the German case. In retrospect, another lesson to offer for the two Koreas is that, after the rule of Diem and his complicated family, no successors were able to effectively establish a stable administration and they gradually lost grip of the countryside to communists. The increasing tax burden on the urban residents—their main support base—to invest in the military and high level of corruption also caused much dissatisfaction among supporters. So even before the surprise attack, the regime was on the verge of collapsing on its own. There are a host of other valid factors such as indecisive US policy, consistent and highly unified approach from North Vietnam across diplomacy, military and counterintelligence, but again public opinion favoring the North government helped tremendously in relatively little violent unification.

The least costly option to consider is the China/Hong Kong integration, which is based on a principle formulated by Deng Xiaoping: “One country, two systems.” Essentially, Hong Kong is a part of China, but it can retain its own administrative, legal, legislative and economic system. Both economic and political systems coexist with much autonomy. If the two Koreas followed this model, they would not have to abruptly merge their two different political and economic systems. There would be more time for both parties to gradually resolve any differences and grow closer together in a more peaceful manner. Within the last several decades, both economies have experienced quite stable and high growth rates. A critical issue is the lack of social integration in which Hong Kong young residents increasingly see themselves as Hong Kong people rather than Chinese people. The 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong is an example of their demand for greater autonomy from China. Overtime, the increasing divergence of ideologies between generations in Hong Kong is threatening the social order and the business situation there.

There are, of course, other consequences unique to the Korean peninsula that the unified Korea would face. A caveat that policy makers should take into account is how to control weapons, missiles and other related technologies from a massive illicit outflow.

## **Recommendations**

### To the US

- **Economic sanctions should be removed** because (1) they take a long time to work and in reality, implementation is costly and not easily enforced; (2) they aim at the elites who can always raise tax to defend themselves; consequently sanctions unintentionally hit the 90% poor North Korean people the most when they already suffer from famine and malnutrition; (3) it isolates North Korea from the rest of the world and keeps pushing the country into the corner. The tangible impacts of these actions will go way further than mere dialogues and talks
- The US should help **set up long-range Wi-fi networks or radio stations to disseminate information into North Korea.**
- **Covert action to influence popular opinion:** With much controversy, covert action may be viewed as inappropriate, but when diplomacy alone fails or any military action

is increasingly politically difficult, costly and dangerous, covert action may be a policy tool to achieve unification on the Korean peninsula. The US should first determine what the goals are, whether they are denuclearization, protection of human rights or regime change. The case of Vietnam serves as a good reminder for the need of a clear and consistent policy. It is problematic when different actors follow their own separate agenda instead of working together towards a common goal. For example, when many Americans were unhappy with Diem's rule in South Vietnam, including Ambassador Collins, CIA agent Lansdale still supported Diem and managed to ignore Washington's commands (Boot 2018). After setting the goal of regime change, for example, the US could attempt to infiltrate networks with both commoners and officials in North Korea. Senior officials in North Korea are concerned about their life and their family under Kim Jong-un's rule. The recent purge of General Kim Won-hong, head of the powerful secret police (Choe 2017) and right-hand man for any North Korean leader, as well as his uncle and brother, may leave Kim Jong-un's subordinates dissatisfied with his ruthlessness. At the same time, it also reveals that factions exist within the Party so the US could employ these agents and supply them with resources. Also outside of Pyongyang, Kim's authority is substantially reduced and fragmentation exists, leaving room for cooperation with peripheral communities.

#### To South Korea

- **Consider confidence-building measures** to promote trust and reduce suspicion. One initiative is reopening the Kaesong industrial complex to resume the trade between the two Koreas. The Winter Olympics also provide a great start for further collaboration and pave the way for enhancing understanding and friendship. Subsequent educational, cultural or humanitarian activities and reunions of family members from the two sides or any other people-to-people interactions will be the bedrock of a good relationship. At the same time, South Korea should consistently monitor public opinion in South Korea towards a unified Korea.
- **Create a fund to help North Korea integrate** with the South. To prepare for integration, South Korea should earmark a fund in advance as well as special programs to help North Koreans integrate to the new society. As projected by the Bank of Korea in 2007, an integration period is over 13 to 39 years and a German style unification will require approximately USD\$500 to 900 billion in the time span of 22 to 39 years (Choi 2008). Nevertheless, as Goldman Sachs forecasted, if backed by appropriate policies such as flexible exchange regime, price stability schemes, introduction of better investment schemes for mineral resources, the costs would be manageable.
- **Cultivate friendly relations with both the US and North Korea and reach out to China** to convince it that an independent, unified Korea will not threaten China's position in the region. It may be challenging now as some other stakeholders in this issue are not cooperating. The US, South Korea's ally, is now taking a tough stance on

North Korea, which may pose a threat to the feasibility of this approach. Moreover, Japan seems determined in their policy towards North Korea, which is also about using sticks rather than carrots to continue to pressure the regime. South Korea may not require consent from these countries as in the case of Germany, but it is crucial to obtain the support from the US and other neighboring countries. South Korean leaders should cultivate friendly relations with both sides instead of choosing one side at the expense of damaging the relations with the other side. On one hand, it should assure the US of the strong alliance in the face of different perspectives on North Korean issue. On the other hand, South Korea may utilize its economic relations with China and the increasingly popular perception of North Korea as a burden in China to convince China that even a unified Korean backed by the US will not threaten China's position in the region. Moreover, China has not always been tolerant of North Korea's provocations, and especially with the recent development there, China has been dissatisfied with the leadership. It is reported that China has expelled a large number of North Korean workers and substantially reduced its energy supply. However, China is deeply concerned about the stability of the regime, and as Song's dual threats model argues, China will only condemn North Korea if it believes North Korea's provocation would result in a US military response and if there is no threat to stability as a result of China's punishment (Song 2011). To demonstrate the willingness to cooperate with China, South Korea may agree to permit temporary deployment of Chinese forces to help with restoring order and offer to allow China resource imports from the North at favorable tax rates and duties.

#### To North Korea

- **Conduct market reforms:** Even living in a state of terror and high control of information, North Korean people still manage to learn more from the outside world and increasingly become cognizant of their poor living situation. If Kim wants to maintain his legitimacy in the long term, North Korea should consider following the model of China and Vietnam. Examples include the establishment of special economic zones and industrial zones, gradual privatization of the state-controlled sectors, or introduction of property rights.

**Part III: Strategic Issues:  
Dilemmas of Deterrence and Defense**



## **Strengthening the US-ROK Alliance Through Transfer of Wartime Operational Control**

Carrie Kagawa

The alliance between the United States (US) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) spans over 60 years and remains the linchpin in the security of the Korean peninsula. However, a decades-long policy debate within and between the US and ROK governments has re-emerged—transferring wartime operational control (OPCON) from the US to ROK. This has become an increasingly salient issue as the military and economy of the ROK continues to strengthen.

While the US and ROK governments have assured the public that the alliance will be as strong or stronger as a result of the wartime OPCON transfer and continued extended deterrence posture (United States Department of Defense 2017), some in the South Korean opposition hold concerns that the transfer signals a weakened alliance in the presence of increasing hostility by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Despite this, the time is ripe to execute the OPCON transfer from the US to the ROK, as the transfer will ultimately strengthen the US-ROK alliance. The underpinning of this pro-transfer analysis is that: 1) the US extended deterrence posture and commitment to the US-ROK alliance will remain in place during and after the transfer, and 2) sufficient US-ROK confidence-building measures will be established to ensure that execution of a pro-transfer policy would not give the perception (to allies or adversaries) of degraded ROK security or a decoupled US-ROK alliance.

This chapter introduces the history of the OPCON debate, outlines the policy fits and starts in the 2000s, and highlights the military and political benefits and risks of the pro-transfer policy with respect to the DPRK. The chapter closes with recommendations to the US Department of Defense (DoD) and ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND).

### **History of OPCON: Founded in the Enduring Alliance**

The issue of OPCON has roots in the Korean War, when President Syngman Rhee delegated authority on July 14, 1950 to US General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of the United Nations Command at the time. This gave General MacArthur authority over US and ROK troops during the Korean War, a strategy that brought the two countries’ forces under one unified command (Yoon 2015).

After the Korean War Armistice was signed in July 1953, the US and ROK entered into a Mutual Defense Treaty on October 1, 1953, committing support and aid to each other in the event of military hostilities, and for US and ROK troops to be jointly stationed in the ROK (McInnis et al. 2017). This structure was maintained in the decades following, and in 1978, the Combined Forces Command (CFC) was established, where OPCON transitioned from the United Nations Command to a US Commander. In the CFC, US and ROK troops continue to

operate in a joint environment, with approximately 50% US and 50% ROK representation (Yoon 2015).

In 2018, the CFC Commander is a four-star US Army General Officer, and the Deputy Commander is a four-star ROK Army General Officer. The Commander oversees 600,000 US and ROK active duty personnel (to include 28,500 US troops), conducts annual joint exercises, and in the event of military hostilities, can deploy an additional 690,000 US troops, augmented with 3.5 million ROK reservists, 160 naval vessels, and 2,000 aircraft (McInnis et al. 2017, United States Forces Korea 2017). As illuminated on the SAIS Conflict Management trip to Seoul, there was broad consensus between the ROK government and non-governmental organizations (NGO) that the US extended deterrence posture in the ROK is sufficient and should be maintained.

After the CFC was established, in 1994, it was jointly agreed that the ROK would assume operational control in times of peace. This was a significant shift that spurred further internal ROK debate over the transfer of OPCON in times of war. As the ROK developed militarily and economically into a strengthened middle power, the debate over transfer of wartime OPCON became increasingly contentious (Yoon 2015).

Pro-transfer advocates in the ROK perceived it as a tangible transition and symbol of increased autonomy, while anti-transfer advocates perceived it as a degradation of ROK security and a weakening of the US alliance. Additionally, some opponents argued that the US used OPCON transfer as a form of threat or punishment after anti-American sentiment flared in the ROK. And there remain minority voices that advocate the redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons to the ROK or development of ROK nuclear weapons, a debate intensifying as the DPRK advances its nuclear program, arguably exacerbated by some perceptions of a weakening US-ROK alliance. The internal ROK debate over OPCON transfer is entangled in positions, emotions, and perceptions of war, occupation, growth, sovereignty, survival, and enduring alliances. This lack of internal ROK consensus is partially why the OPCON transfer has yet to be fully realized. Historically, it has been a policy that progresses and regresses in cyclical fashion.

### **The OPCON Debate: A Policy of Fits and Starts**

Since 2000, the internal ROK debate regarding transfer of wartime OPCON can be characterized as a period of fits and starts. Amidst ongoing consultations between the US and ROK, transfer of wartime OPCON emerged as an official position under ROK President Roh Moo-hyun (Yoon 2015). On October 1, 2005, ROK Armed Forces Day, President Roh stated, “I have been emphasizing on self-reliant defense. It is so natural and fundamental for a sovereign nation to have such . . . through the exercise of the wartime control, we will be born again as a self-reliant army” (Yoon 2015, 93). This position gained momentum as President Roh and US President George W. Bush agreed on a policy that would transfer wartime OPCON to ROK by April 2012 (Yoon 2015).

However, President Roh's pro-transfer policy was met with internal South Korean opposition, as a result of three events in 2010. First, on March 26, 2010, a ROK ship, the *Cheonan*, was attacked by a torpedo resulting in 46 ROK casualties. A multinational team of investigators from Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the US verified that the torpedo attack was initiated by the DPRK (Bahng 2011). Second, on November 23, 2010, the DPRK shelled Yeonpyong, a ROK island, resulting in two ROK casualties. The DPRK accepted responsibility for the attack, contending that they were provoked by ROK military testing (McDonald 2010). Third, shortly after the pro-transfer policy was announced by President Roh, senior ROK military and civilian officials began to mobilize, voicing their opposition. This opposition movement swelled in May 2010 when two organizations, the Korean Retired Generals and Admirals Association and the Korea Veterans Association, revealed that they had collected over ten million signatures in opposition to the OPCON transfer (at the time, approximately 20% of the ROK population). The argument was that it was too early to consider wartime OPCON transfer and that this policy would severely degrade the US-ROK alliance, and ultimately, ROK security (Yoon 2015).

The two direct attacks and petitions containing ten million signatures proved significant during the transition of ROK presidential administrations. Upon ROK President Lee Myung-bak's transition to office, and in consultation with US President Barack Obama, the transfer was delayed until December 2015 (Yoon 2015).

When ROK President Park Geun-hye assumed office in 2013, she requested that the transfer be delayed again, and President Obama ultimately agreed (Yoon 2015). The new transfer date was targeted for the 2020s; however, most significantly, this delay also elicited a change in policy that shifted the criteria for OPCON transfer from time-based to conditions-based requirements (Park 2015). The three conditions for transfer, as outlined by then-US Forces Korea (USFK) Commander, General Curtis Scaparrotti during a US Congressional testimony in April 2015, included:

1. "South Korea must develop the command and control capacity to lead a combined and multinational force in high-intensity conflict;
2. South Korea must improve its capabilities to respond to the growing nuclear and missile threat in North Korea; and
3. The OPCON transition should take place at a time that is conducive to transition" (McInnis et al. 2017, 53).

These conditions for transfer remained in place under the Administration of President Moon Jae-in. In a notable shift from President Moon's predecessors, he has called for an *expedited* transfer of wartime OPCON to be completed by the end of his presidential term in May 2022 (SAIS Group Meeting with Ministry of National Defense, Seoul, 24 January 2018). For those in the South Korean opposition, this has regenerated concerns of security degradation, vulnerabilities, and decoupling of the US-ROK alliance (whether by perception or reality), especially considering the advancement of the DPRK nuclear program and demonstrations of hostility.

One primary issue of debate throughout the 2000s has been the anticipated command structure upon completion of the transfer. According to one US government official, while the future command structure under wartime OPCON is still somewhat hazy, there appears to be consensus on a likely leadership structure in the top ranks of the CFC. Specifically, in 2018, CFC senior military leadership is composed of a four-star US Army General Officer serving as Commander and a four-star ROK Army General Officer serving as Deputy Commander. Upon completion of the wartime OPCON transfer, the leadership structure would be flipped, with a four-star ROK Army General Officer as Commander, and a four-star US Army General Officer as Deputy Commander (SAIS Group Meeting with Ministry of National Defense, Seoul, 24 January 2018). This debate regarding the command structure emerges in several dimensions, to be discussed below.

### **Underpinning of the Pro-Transfer Argument**

Despite the uncertainty of the policy in the 2000s, the benefits of a pro-transfer position outweigh the costs, and the Moon Administration is progressing steadily toward this goal. However, some in the South Korean opposition maintain doubts that the US extended deterrence is a reliable source of security. This concern has become magnified in light of the advancement of the DPRK nuclear program and the fractured quality of the US policy toward Korea under the Administration of US President Donald Trump. As will be discussed below, these concerns lead some in the ROK opposition to demand the US redeployment of small tactical nuclear weapons to the ROK or that the ROK be given permission to develop their own nuclear weapons program. This is a dangerous solution.

Instead, as the OPCON transfer steadily progresses under the Moon Administration, the US-ROK alliance can and should do more to ensure that concerns regarding the US extended deterrence posture are assuaged and that sufficient confidence-building measures are established between the allies. This is the underpinning of the pro-transfer analysis. Each will be taken briefly in turn.

First, the US extended deterrence posture and commitment of the US-ROK alliance must remain in place amidst and after the transfer. The transfer of wartime OPCON is a significant process, both procedurally and symbolically. In the midst of this transition, the US must assure the ROK that the alliance remains steadfast. This should include a renewal of the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953, which reflects the evolving security environment, changing landscape, and expectations for the alliance during the transition of command. In addition, the US-ROK could pursue an enhanced extended deterrence posture that complements the OPCON transfer, to include continuing consultations, strengthening the extended deterrence posture with regional neighbors (i.e., Japan), diversifying training in the joint military exercises, and temporarily increasing US troop presence on the peninsula (Wolfsthal and Dalton 2017). Enhanced extended deterrence must be executed carefully, so as not to inflame relations with the DPRK.

Second, sufficient US-ROK confidence-building measures must be established to ensure that the OPCON transfer would not give the perception (to allies or adversaries) of degraded ROK security or a decoupled US-ROK alliance. The continued US presence and commitment to the ROK, in itself, is a symbol and confidence-building measure. Other confidence-building measures include the expeditious appointment of a subject matter expert to the position of US Ambassador to the ROK, the enhancement of defense and diplomatic strategic and operational coordination between the allies, and a robust engagement and outreach campaign to both the US and the ROK people (Wolfsthal and Dalton 2017). These actions should be rooted in measured policy statements versus inflammatory rhetoric, the latter of which arguably degrades trust in the alliance.

The pro-transfer argument relies on these two points. An analysis of opportunities and challenges of the pro-transfer position will follow, with both military and political benefits of the policy addressed in turn.

### **OPCON Transfer: Military and Political Implications**

The intertwined military and political implications of wartime OPCON transfer offer a complex picture. This analysis will illuminate some of the major military and political benefits and implications of the pro-transfer policy with respect to the DPRK, as well as risks of the transfer. Again, the underpinning of the argument remains that amidst the transition, the US extended deterrence posture must be maintained and sufficient confidence-building measures must be established to the satisfaction of both allies. Successfully executed, the OPCON transfer will strengthen the US-ROK alliance.

#### Military Implications

##### *Increasing ROK's Security Leverage*

According to one former US Department of Defense official, the transfer of wartime OPCON will enable the ROK to gain increased security leverage with the DPRK, and in time, will facilitate more productive inter-Korean dialogue. By transitioning OPCON and placing the ROK in the lead on military strategy and operations (i.e., timing or potential postponement of the US-ROK joint exercises as productive inter-Korean dialogues occur), the DPRK would have no option except to interact directly with the ROK on security and defense issues. The potential for the ROK to be the lead decision-maker would give their military and political leaders more leverage in negotiations.

This prospect of increased security leverage comes in a period where ROK leverage in other areas with the DPRK has waned. For example, according to the former DoD official, due to the sanctions imposed upon the DPRK, the ROK has minimal economic leverage in which to reinforce behavior or negotiate. In addition, the ROK has minimal security leverage over the DPRK, because the DPRK has generally preferred the US as their primary interlocutor, not the ROK. This is one dimension of a concept referenced as *Korea Passing*, where ROK political elites perceive that their presence and interests are overlooked in discussions and

decisions that directly impact them (SAIS Group Meeting with Jenny Town, Washington DC, 2 November 2017). However, under the transfer of wartime OPCON and with the ROK in the driver's seat, their security leverage with respect to the DPRK would increase. As a result, bypassing or ignoring the ROK would be almost impossible.

#### *Strengthening the ROK Military by Reversing the OPCON Paradox*

Since the 1950s, the US and ROK have operated in lockstep, with assurances that in the event of military hostilities, the US would be an unwavering ally to the ROK. However, a concept referenced as the *wartime OPCON paradox*, proposed by a retired ROK Brigadier General who wished to remain anonymous, posits that the extended US presence has inhibited the full development of the ROK military, counter to the alliance's goals (Yoon 2015).

Specifically, the ROK Brigadier General noted that the command structure has indeed protected and benefited the ROK people in the past. However, he argues that "because of such protection, the Korean military grew abnormally . . . [and this has] weakened the capability of the ROK military to stand on their own" (Yoon 2015). Similarly, Yoon elaborates that the command structure may have actually "loosened" the South Korean military because they are "not desperate to build a stronger independent army" (2015, 103). In sum, the *wartime OPCON paradox* holds the perception that ROK reliance on the US presence has stunted ROK defense capabilities.

However, as OPCON transfer under the Moon Administration progresses, arguably a renewed sense of urgency will emerge, in an effort to rapidly increase levels of readiness in Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR); Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (C<sup>4</sup>I); Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD); and Critical Munitions (US Committee on Armed Services 2015). As the US-ROK alliance works toward fulfilling the conditions for transfer and standards for readiness, the ROK military has the opportunity to make significant and demonstrable progress and reverse the unintended consequences of an enduring joint presence. This will benefit the ROK security apparatus in the long run, which will also strengthen the US-ROK alliance.

#### *Risks and Limitations*

As with any policy, there are inherent risks of the pro-transfer position. The most significant risk is the perception from the DPRK and other adversaries that the US-ROK alliance is weakening. More specifically, "OPCON transfer would . . . involve changes to key aspects of long-established bilateral security structures . . . [and theoretically] it could weaken deterrence by suggesting to Pyongyang that there were now gaps in the alliance, most specifically in the ability to coordinate a ROK-US military response to a North Korean attack" (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014). This could embolden adversaries to take a more aggressive posture toward the ROK and other US allies in the Asia Pacific.

In addition, the ROK's historical uncertainty regarding the policy, compounded with the fractured quality of current US government strategy and leadership in the ROK, may take

its toll on the US-ROK alliance. The strain of uncertainty can lead to missteps, miscommunications, and miscalculations, even among the most trusted allies.

The transfer of OPCON may also induce a resurgence of advocates for the US redeployment of small tactical nuclear weapons to the ROK. This is a dangerous course of action, but advocated by some in the opposition due to concerns about ROK self-reliance, parity with the DPRK with respect to nuclear weapons, and the desire for an increased physical demonstration of US commitment. For instance, in 2018, the Liberty Korea Party continues to advocate this position. Despite their efforts (and some US leadership support), this is unlikely to gain traction because: 1) the ROK is a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and 2) the arguably impossible scenario that the US would redeploy small tactical nuclear weapons, if wartime OPCON transfer placed a foreign government (even though an ally) in control of US nuclear weapons. If the latter of these two points is accepted, this also leads some opposition voices to further call for the ROK to develop their own nuclear weapons.

However, both courses of action (the US redeployment of small tactical nuclear weapons or the development of ROK nuclear weapons) are ill-advised as they would exacerbate the conflict between the ROK and DPRK. To illustrate, one specific reason for not pursuing either course of action is that the ROK acquisition of nuclear weapons legitimizes the DPRK's concerns, playing directly into the DPRK ideological pillar of an overly hostile and threatening US-ROK alliance. The DPRK would have even less incentive to give up their nuclear weapons if they perceived a direct threat of nuclear attack from the ROK. As a result, the crisis could escalate (Wolfsthal and Dalton 2017).

While these are significant challenges, with proper policy and planning, coordination between the US and ROK, and sufficient confidence-building measures to assure the public of the enduring alliance and extended deterrence posture, the military benefits of OPCON transfer would outweigh the costs.

### Political Implications

#### *Countering the DPRK Ideology*

A primary pillar of the DPRK ideology is the unequivocal withdrawal of US forces from the Korean peninsula. To reinforce this message, DPRK propaganda frames the US as imperialists with a hostile military posture, and frames the ROK as a puppet of the US. This was underscored during the SAIS Conflict Management trip from ROK government officials, NGO officials, and DPRK defectors.

One primary political benefit of the wartime OPCON transfer is that it evolves the US-ROK alliance in a direction that contradicts the DPRK ideology and propaganda of a hostile US military that is preventing Korean unification, and that the ROK is a puppet of the US (Bauer 2011). According to Bauer, "OPCON transition holds real strategic promise because it imperils the North's ideology of regime control . . . [and in] contrast, American leadership and the status quo play directly into the hands of North Korean propaganda and its political and

moral influences” (2011, 72). As OPCON transfer progresses and ROK assumes a more prominent leadership role in the alliance, this will enable the ROK to gain political leverage by moving in a direction that weakens a primary DPRK ideological pillar and propaganda message.

#### *Aligning the US-ROK Political Leadership*

The combination of US and ROK leadership, with President Trump and President Moon respectively, may create conditions that enable execution of an expedited wartime OPCON transfer. Unlike past combinations of US and ROK presidents, both President Trump and President Moon support an expedited transfer. With both leaders in alignment, there is decreased risk for political missteps, miscommunications, and miscalculations between the allies. In addition, there is a potential gain of leverage under a unified policy position that creates political conditions ripe for the OPCON transfer.

Although President Trump and President Moon agree on the OPCON transfer, there are broader political challenges. For instance with regard to the DPRK, President Trump prefers a campaign of maximum pressure, with all options (i.e., inflammatory rhetoric, US military action, pre-emptive strikes) on the table, whereas President Moon prefers an approach centered on maximum engagement with the DPRK. In addition, as of March 2018, the Trump Administration’s failure to appoint a US Ambassador to the ROK and the striking timing of the retirement of Mr. Joseph Yun, US Envoy to North Korea, are clear signals of internal fractures in the US policy approach toward the conflict, which are degrading US-ROK relations.

Despite these political challenges, President Trump and President Moon remain committed to the OPCON transfer and this is arguably an issue in which the US and ROK can regain trust in the alliance. These broader political dynamics between the two leaders may at some point impact the prospect of transfer, but that is yet to be seen.

#### *Risks and Limitations*

As with the military implications, there are also political risks. With regard to the ROK, recalling that the 2015 agreement established wartime OPCON transfer as conditions-based, President Moon has effectively put a deadline (time-based requirement) on the transfer by May 2022, the end of his presidential term. According to one former DoD official, President Moon may experience domestic and international political consequences in reconciling the past agreement that calls for a conditions-based transfer and his current policy which can be perceived as a time-based transfer. In addition, as threaded through the history of this policy, there remain some in the South Korean opposition who do not want the OPCON transfer to progress for fear of degraded ROK security. Addressing the ROK domestic concerns will require confidence-building measures that ensure that the US-ROK alliance remains strong and that the OPCON transfer will further strengthen ROK security in the long-run.

In addition, succession planning for President Trump and President Moon will be a political factor that may affect the OPCON transfer. The past has illuminated that this issue has elicited starkly different positions in both the US and ROK leadership. As the US presidential election approaches in 2020 and the ROK presidential election approaches in 2022, the continuity of OPCON transfer will be contingent upon the progress completed toward fulfilling the conditions and the political will of their (potential) successors. There is arguably a point at which progress and momentum of the OPCON transfer will become inevitable or irreversible, both from the military and political perspectives. But defining this point-of-no-return has yet to be publicly stated.

Finally, according to one US government official, the most significant political risk for the US rests in the future command structure of the CFC, specifically that of a ROK Army General Officer in command of US troops. From a US domestic policy perspective, it may be unpalatable (or, impossible in the court of public opinion) for US troops to serve under a CFC Commander that is not an American, especially in a hot war. The US domestic political challenges that will arise as a result of the anticipated command structure will require exceptional engagement, attention, and savvy in a multidisciplinary approach including US federal interagency cooperation, Congress, Congressionally chartered Veteran Service Organizations (i.e., American Legion), Military Service Organizations, and military families. It will also require a military retention strategy, as this would arguably be a controversial command structure in the eyes of US service members. This US domestic engagement also requires an international complement, to ensure that senior ROK military leadership understands the potential US domestic constituency concerns and that trust does not degrade between the allies.

The issue of command structure, however, should not be viewed in a US-ROK vacuum, especially with respect to an escalation of violence. In the event of military hostilities that would potentially draw in other regional actors in the Asia Pacific, this would fall under the command and control authority of US Pacific Command (PACOM). While beyond the scope of this paper, there are broader geopolitical considerations that interplay with the anticipated command structure of the CFC.

While these challenges are significant, they are not insurmountable. The ability of the US and ROK governments to devise effective policy, plans, and confidence-building measures, will mitigate the political risks of wartime OPCON transfer.

## **Conclusion**

The transfer of wartime OPCON from the US to the ROK has a complicated history. Tangled in this controversial policy are positions, emotions, and perceptions of war, occupation, growth, sovereignty, survival, and enduring alliances. However, as the ROK continues to demonstrate its strengthened capacities, the time is ripe for wartime OPCON transfer to move forward as a means to strengthen the US-ROK alliance. Militarily, the transfer will enable the ROK to increase their leverage and generate urgency in development of their future defense

capabilities. Politically, the transfer promotes ROK sovereignty and autonomy, while countering the DPRK ideology and propaganda of an overly hostile US military posture.

As the US and ROK continue consultations and progress toward the wartime OPCON transfer, the US must maintain its extended deterrence posture and, in close conjunction with the diplomatic community, establish the foundation for consistent, sound, accountable, and legitimate confidence-building measures that are widely recognized by the US and ROK people. These confidence-building measures must reinforce the belief that the OPCON transfer will strengthen the ROK position and, in tandem, continue to strengthen the alliance between the US and ROK.

## **Recommendations**

### To the US Department of Defense and ROK Ministry of National Defense

- **Maintain and publicly reaffirm the US extended deterrence posture in the ROK.** This may include enhancing the US extended deterrence posture in the ROK, in a way complementary to the OPCON transfer.
  - **Renew the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953**, to reflect the evolving security environment and expectations for the alliance during the transition of command. This public recommitment should include a robust strategic engagement component, coordinated for audiences in the US, ROK, and regional actors in the Asia Pacific.
- **Increase clarity in joint US-ROK defense policy positions and red lines** in dialogue with the DPRK and/or negotiations with regional stakeholders.
- **Continue robust consultations between DoD and MND** to ensure the three conditions for OPCON transfer are fulfilled. As allowable, joint updates to the public should be part of a broader confidence-building campaign. (When possible, these public updates should be led by the ROK.)
- **Postpone the joint US-ROK military exercises** contingent upon ongoing and productive dialogue between the ROK and DPRK.
- **No pre-emptive US military strike.** A pre-emptive US military strike against the DPRK would have catastrophic impacts on the ROK, to include the potential of millions of ROK casualties if the DPRK were to counterstrike. It is recommended in the strongest terms that a pre-emptive US military strike (in word/threat or action) not be executed.
- **Develop a ROK-led confidence-building outreach campaign** in conjunction with the US Department of State and ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ensure strategic engagement and communications are standardized, transparent, accountable, legitimate, and accountable to the ROK people.

## **Managing a Deterrent North Korea: Lessons from Pakistan**

Charlie Bruer

Over the past few years, American citizens, their policymakers, and much of the world have grown increasingly concerned with growing tensions on the Korean peninsula and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) efforts to improve their nuclear weapon and delivery system technologies. While some of this concern has been directed towards the future of the global nonproliferation regime and the dynamic geopolitics of Asia, a significant portion has centered around the intended utility of Kim Jong-un's nuclear weapons. What does he want? Can he be deterred? Although Kim has been unusually transparent about the technological improvements the DPRK is making to their delivery systems, gauging the true purpose of their nuclear arsenal has driven incredible speculation, ranging from ensuring against regime collapse, forcefully reunifying the Korean peninsula, to launching an attack on the United States (US) mainland. This uncertainty also grips the highest levels of the American security establishment. In August 2017, US National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster noted that "classical deterrence theory" may not apply to Kim, suggesting that the DPRK will not behave like other nuclear-armed states (Friedman 2017). Although the US may not be ideally positioned to determine the intent of Kim Jong-un at present, examining the experiences of other states that have developed nuclear weapons outside of the international nonproliferation regime may provide a framework upon which policymakers can build a strategy for managing a fully capable, nuclear-armed DPRK in the future.

Of those states, Pakistan invites an especially rich comparison, given its relatively recent development of nuclear weapons and its long-standing revisionist outlook towards India. While there are many substantial differences between Pakistan and the DPRK, Pakistan's experience in the Kargil conflict following its first nuclear weapons test in 1998 adds credence to the belief that nuclear weapons provide extremely limited utility beyond defensive deterrence. Beyond Pakistan's post-nuclear behavior, lessons learned from studying the US response to Pakistan's nuclear development could also prove useful in developing a policy that is forced to accept the existence of a nuclear DPRK. Although much about the rising tensions on the Korean peninsula remains uncertain, the Pakistani case supplies evidence that the DPRK will likely find that their nuclear weapons will not produce measurable offensive benefit, and that a strategy that emphasizes flexibility, deterrence and communication could provide the US and its allies with strong means to respond to any future crises on the Korean peninsula.

### **The DPRK and the Stability-Instability Paradox**

Among the explanations for the DPRK's steadfast commitment to developing nuclear weapons that have the capacity to strike North America, a relatively common analysis cites the expressed desire of Kim Jong-un to reunite the Korean peninsula on the DPRK's terms.

Operating on the assumption that Kim will use his nuclear arsenal to provide offensive cover, this theory contends that the DPRK will threaten to destroy an American city unless the US withdraws its forces from South Korea, leaving an opportunity for the DPRK to overrun South Korean defenses and capture the peninsula. This theory appears to have some following within the Trump Administration, as senior national security officials have expressed their opinion that Kim Jong-un will “use that weapon for nuclear blackmail, and then to ‘reunify’ the peninsula under the red banner ... and to drive the States and our allies away from this peninsula that he would then try to dominate” (H.R. McMaster in Jeffery 2018). While this thinking fails to address the fact that the DPRK remains woefully outmatched by South Korea with respect to the conventional military forces it would need to effectively invade and hold the remainder of the peninsula, it also raises an important question about whether or not the DPRK’s improved nuclear delivery vehicles will embolden Kim Jong-un to pursue a more aggressive, revisionist agenda. This feared potential increase in provocation finds its theoretical underpinnings in the concept known as the stability-instability paradox.

This paradox states that while nuclear-armed countries will avoid major wars or provocations with other nuclear-armed states that could escalate to nuclear use (thus achieving nuclear *stability*), the security provided by their nuclear arsenal and the principle of mutually assured destruction will empower them to engage in provocations and smaller, non-nuclear conflicts with their adversaries (thus creating conventional *instability*) (Krepon 2005). Put into the context of the current crisis on the Korean peninsula, this theory contends that a DPRK freshly equipped with a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) will attempt to escalate its provocative regional activities under the assumption that its nuclear shield will protect it from retaliation. Although it provides a compelling justification for the US government’s maximum pressure campaign against the DPRK and its unwillingness to consider officially the possibility of the DPRK keeping its nuclear arms, the practical existence of the paradox remains up for debate. Epitomizing this debate is a conflict known as the Kargil War, which occurred between Pakistan and India in a portion of Kashmir and provides ample ammunition for both believers and non-believers of the stability-instability paradox.

#### Pakistani Nuclear Weapons and the Kargil War

Following China’s first nuclear weapons test in 1964, India began its nuclear development program in earnest, eventually completing its first bomb in 1974. India’s testing of their initial device, named the ‘Smiling Buddha,’ took much of the world by surprise and prompted Pakistan, India’s long-standing rival, to initiate its nuclear weapons research. This research was completed in 1998, when Pakistan conducted an underground test of its weapons in direct response to a series of Indian nuclear tests that ended a twenty-four year period with no nuclear testing activity on the subcontinent. Although India and Pakistan had engaged in several wars and armed conflicts along their border, the altercation that followed the Pakistani tests is most relevant to the debate over the nature of both the stability-instability paradox and the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence, given that it was the first time two nuclear-armed countries

had engaged in direct military conflict with one another. The Kargil War began in May of 1999 when Pakistani forces, disguised as independent insurgents, crossed the international line-of-control dividing Kashmir and took up positions in and around the city of Kargil.



Source: South Asia Tribune

Given that the area surrounding Kargil is extremely rugged terrain, Indian forces did not discover the infiltration for weeks and did not officially confirm Pakistani involvement until even later. After months of fighting, the Indian army eventually pushed the Pakistani forces back across the line-of-control, ending the conflict in July of 1999 with no measurable change in either state's territorial holdings. Although the conflict was relatively short-lived and never escalated beyond conventional means, its eruption so soon after nuclear tests by both countries and the rhetoric of political leaders during the crisis led many to believe that the Kargil War provides a perfect example of the stability-instability paradox. In testimony to Congress, nuclear strategy expert George Perkovich stated that "the Pakistani militarily clearly was emboldened by its nuclear deterrent cover to markedly increase coercion against India [via its invasion of Kargil]" (Perkovich 2006). Other scholars reference the provocative language of Pakistani political leaders during the conflict as evidence of Pakistan's commitment to using their newly-developed nuclear deterrent as a way of preventing retaliatory measures from India (Kapur 2003). In the early days of the war, the Pakistani foreign secretary warned that "Pakistan could use any weapon to defend its territorial integrity" (Encyclopedia.com 2006). This statement, which implied that Pakistan was willing to use its nuclear arsenal during the conflict, was supported by comments made by a senior Pakistani legislator who stated that "the purpose of developing weapons becomes meaningless if they are not used when they are needed" (Ahmed 2000). Although these statements appear to suggest that Pakistan's recent

acquisition of nuclear weapons *drove* them to conduct and continue a revisionist operation in Kashmir, there is little way to know for sure.

Critics of this analysis of the Kargil War note that senior Pakistani military officials were calling for an infiltration of the region years before Pakistan conducted its first nuclear test, which suggests that this conflict would have occurred regardless of the status of Pakistan's nuclear program. According to T. Negeen Pegahi, General Pervez Musharraf, who was appointed to be Pakistan's Army Chief just months before the Kargil War, "had been pushing a Kargil-like operation for years" (Pegahi 2018). Musharraf, Pegahi argues, was not emboldened by Pakistan's nuclear stockpile, but rather capitalized on an opportunity to initiate the operation as Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif remained personally uninterested in regional geopolitics, and Pakistani security forces worried about imminent Indian activity elsewhere in Kashmir (Pegahi 2018). Additionally, the nascent status of Pakistan's nuclear program in 1999 makes its role in motivating the Kargil infiltration even more suspect, given that Pakistan had not yet demonstrated its ability to deliver a nuclear asset beyond a test range. It is more likely that Pakistani generals saw Kargil, not as a chance to test the potential cover provided by a nuclear weapons system that they did not fully understand, but rather as an opportunity to exploit India's thin fortification of the region's rugged terrain via conventional means. In addition to analyzing the motivating forces that drove Pakistan to attempt this operation, recognizing what influence, if any, Pakistan's nuclear weapons exerted on India's response is vital to identifying whether the stability-instability paradox is useful for understanding this conflict.

#### India's Response to Kargil: Strategic or Deterred?

Academic literature that identifies the Kargil War as a clear, real-world example of the paradox cite India's relatively limited and casualty-heavy reaction to the Pakistani incursion as evidence that their military decision making was influenced by the deterrent effects of Pakistani nuclear weapons (Kapur 2003). However, tactical analysis has illuminated that India's response was reasonable and consistent with its goals, and not driven by its fear of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Following India's discovery of Pakistani troops in Kargil, it sent troops directly up steep mountain slopes to oust Pakistani troops rather than deploying them across a much more accessible point on the line of control to open a second front in the conflict and potentially cut off Pakistan's ability to easily resupply their presence in Kargil. Due to the terrain and the low number of Indian soldiers initially deployed in Kargil, retaking the territory proved to be arduous and slow. An argument can be made that India avoided responding to Pakistan's invasion with a reciprocal action into Pakistani territory because they were concerned about escalating the conflict, given Pakistan's recent nuclearization. However, this argument fails to account for the fact that India's political leaders sought only to expel the Pakistani's from Indian-controlled territory, not to engage in a multi-front war with their neighbor. Additionally, Pegahi contends that the alternate military reaction would not have made retaking Kargil easier and would have likely resulted in a higher Indian body count

(Pegahi 2018). Ultimately, the Indian response to the invasion successfully expelled the Pakistanis on India's terms, avoided a politically undesirable war in South Asia, and left the territorial claims of both parties unchanged.

Beyond the Kashmir War, some scholars point to an increased number of Pakistani-sponsored terror attacks in India beginning in the early 2000s as another indication that nuclear weapons may have encouraged Pakistan to escalate its antagonism, in line with the expectations provided by stability-instability paradox (Panda and Narang 2017). While this correlation may appear as an indication that nuclear forces embolden a state to make limited, non-nuclear provocations, any proof that this escalation in behavior is tied to a state's perception of its nuclear deterrent remains elusive. Given the domestic politico-military environment in Pakistan and the immature state of its nuclear arsenal, it is unlikely that Pakistan initiated this conflict with India with any intent of using its nuclear weapons as a deterrent cover. This analysis undermines the predictions of the stability-instability paradox and lends credence to the belief that utility of nuclear weapons may be limited to deterring major wars and existential threats.

#### Kargil vs. Korea: Applicable Lessons?

It is clear that conflict between and politics within Pakistan and India differ substantially from the current situation on the Korean Peninsula; however, an analysis of the drivers and consequences of the Kargil War provide useful insights on the practical relevance of the stability-instability paradox to the DPRK and the risk of nuclear-motivated tension escalation in the future. The experience of Pakistan during and after the Kargil War suggest that there is no reason for the world to expect that a DPRK armed with a nuclear-capable ICBM will pursue a more aggressively revisionist, or even belligerent, course of action. Although both Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump continue to exchange inflammatory rhetoric, the expressed purpose of the DPRK's nuclear forces has been addressed in official statements from Pyongyang. In 2013, seven years after the DPRK tested its first nuclear bomb, the government passed a law governing its nuclear use policy that noted that the DPRK's nuclear weapons "are just means for defense as [the DPRK] was compelled to have access to them to cope with the ever-escalating hostile policy of the US and the nuclear threat" (Panda and Narang 2017). Additionally, although the DPRK has possessed the capability to launch a nuclear attack on its neighbors for over a decade, there has been no dramatic increase in provocative behavior or serious attempts at forcefully reuniting the Korean peninsula. The DPRK also has to check its revisionist aims against a far more formidable border area than the Indian-Pakistani line of control. Due to the Demilitarized Zone's status as the most fortified border in the world, the DPRK would be unable to mount any incursion without engaging in a massive military effort that would likely result in all out regional war. While these analyses alone may not provide enough peace of mind to US and South Korean leaders regarding the intent of Kim Jong-un, policy-makers can use India's experience during the Kargil War to develop a response plan for

the unlikely event that the DPRK engages in escalated provocations under the perceived cover of its nuclear weapons.

DPRK military provocations took place in 2010, when the DPRK shelled the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong and sank a South Korean Navy ship, killing 46 sailors. Similar acts of aggression, like shooting down US or South Korean military planes flying close to DPRK airspace or launching a missile near islands within the US sphere of influence, may occur in the future. These provocations must be met with a confident and proportional reaction, much like the one that was delivered by the South Korean Army following the shelling of Yeonpyeong. In 2013, the US and South Korea signed a Combined Counter-Provocation Plan that outlined the “South Korean-led, US supported” contingency plans for responding to DPRK provocations like the activity in 2010 (Sang-Hun2013). Maintaining this plan is necessary not only to strengthen the US-South Korea alliance, but to demonstrate clearly that the alliance will respond consistently to any DPRK provocations, regardless of whether it has deployed a nuclear-capable ICBM or not. Preserving the US commitment to South Korea through additional troop deployments and parallel messaging will help bolster the alliance’s deterrence posture and limit the chances for alliance decoupling.

Although the Kargil War case study provides little evidence that states with newly-acquired nuclear weapons readily become emboldened enough to use those weapons as cover for escalated revisionist provocations, the risk that political miscalculation could lead to a nuclear catastrophe remains elevated, especially when states with limited means of communication square off against each other. Given that contact between the US and the DPRK is almost nonexistent at the time of this writing, US and South Korea should consider publicly identifying some of the events that would trigger a response from their Combined Counter-Provocation Plan to ensure that the chances of a nuclear miscalculation occurring are reduced to the lowest level possible.

#### Perception Becomes Reality: US Responses to Pakistani and DPRK Proliferation

Beyond the Kargil War, comparing Pakistan’s post-nuclear relationship with the US to the American reaction to the nuclearization of the DPRK illuminates several stark differences in the US perception of nuclear threats and suggests several measures they could take to reduce tension on the peninsula and work towards a pragmatic solution to the DPRK nuclear question. While the US condemned Pakistani nuclear activities and imposed short-lived sanctions on Islamabad following Pakistan’s nuclear tests of 1998, the US and the international community ultimately allowed the country’s breach of international nonproliferation norms to go unchecked and unchallenged. This was done on the basis of several judgments concerning the intent of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons and their geopolitical importance during the Cold War and the War in Afghanistan. The US did not see Pakistani nuclear weapons as a threat to American national security. Analysts determined that Pakistan was developing its weapons to provide a defensive deterrence posture in direct response to India’s nuclear weapons, a solid

platform to use in defense of their territorial integrity and much needed boost to their military power, given the inferiority of their conventional forces relative to India.

Although the US expressed alarm at Pakistan's nuclear weapons tests, US intelligence knew of Pakistan's nuclear intent as early as 1979 (Rezaei 2017). However, due to Pakistan's ideal geographic location and its willingness to direct US aid into Afghanistan during the Soviet war of the 1980s, American leaders provided significant financial assistance to the Pakistani government while looking the other way as they continued to expand their fissile material enrichment and manufacturing capabilities. Although the US ceased its provision of aid to Pakistan after the end of the Cold War and imposed sanctions on India and Pakistan following their weapons tests in 1998, those were withdrawn after the US invaded Afghanistan, due to the need for Pakistani security and logistical support for operations in South Asia (Rezaei 2017). In addition to geopolitical considerations, the US also assumed that the development of nuclear weapons in Pakistan would not encourage further proliferation within the region. While they may have misjudged the role that Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan would play in proliferating nuclear weapons technology well beyond the confines of South Asia, US analysts correctly judged that no other countries would actively pursue a nuclear program in direct response to Pakistan's.

From the outset, it is clear that the US response to the DPRK's nuclear activities is driven by dramatically different judgments and remains far less accommodating than its response to Pakistan. Some of that difference is derived from the DPRK's relatively low geopolitical value to the US, as the US maintains strong mutual defense agreements elsewhere in East Asia, and any attempts to position US forces on DPRK territory would be extremely offensive to China and Russia. With regards to the threat to US national security, statements from senior Trump administration officials make it clear that it views a nuclear DPRK as "a potential existential threat to the United States" (Alexander 2018). This view is also shared by a majority of the American public, as 75% of respondents to a Chicago Council survey said that the DPRK "is a critical threat facing the US, placing it within the top threats facing the country" (Friedhoff and Smeltz 2017). While this perception is justified, given Kim Jong-un's frequent threats to US interests and territories, many of the assessments the US made about the Pakistan's rationale for developing nuclear weapons could easily apply to the DPRK. Like Pakistan, the DPRK seeks a nuclear deterrent to ensure its territorial integrity and protect against regime change. As Kim Jong-un bore witness to the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya, it is likely that he sees nuclear weapons as the only way to guard against foreign efforts to force regime collapse. Additionally, the DPRK has indicated its interest in using its nuclear arsenal as a defensive cover that allows it to reduce overall military spending on its conventional forces and pivot resources towards developing the DPRK economy, a policy Kim Jong-un calls *byungjin*. This supports the theory that the DPRK intends to use nuclear weapons as a defensive deterrent, as the Kim regime turns its attention towards pressing domestic issues.

A major topic that dominates US thinking on the DPRK is rationality. Can the US expect the DPRK to behave as other nuclear weapon states have? Will deterrence work? National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster has expressed doubt that the DPRK is influenced by nuclear deterrence theory, due to the regime's ruthlessness and brutality (Friedman 2017). During the American assessment of Pakistan's intentions, the US surmised that the Pakistanis were simply responding rationally to perceived threats from India and that a nuclear dyad in South Asia would remain stable via the principles of deterrence and mutually assured destruction. By contrast, the American failure to determine Kim Jong-un's rationality is especially dangerous, as it eliminates a powerful action disincentive and makes the risks of miscalculation and escalation much greater. Other brutal regimes, like the Soviet Union, have shown themselves capable of possessing rational nuclear strategies that closely follow the expectations of deterrence theory. Why should the US expect anything different from the DPRK? Kim Jong-un understands that any rapid escalation in tension on the peninsula presents a risk to his regime's survivability, given the DPRK's substantial conventional and nuclear force inferiority relative to South Korea and the US. If the US is able to view the nuclear development program of the DPRK through a lens similar to the one applied to Pakistan and other proliferant nations, it will gain a more complete and realistic perspective on the intent of the DPRK program and recognize that a strong regional deterrent posture can be successfully applied towards the DPRK.

### **Conclusion**

As tensions remain high on the Korean peninsula, all parties would be wise to apply the lessons learned from the Kargil War, Pakistan's post-nuclear behavior, and previous international responses to states with proliferant intentions. Pakistan's experience in the Kargil War provides evidence that recently-acquired nuclear weapons do not necessarily make states more likely to engage in low-level conventional conflict, and that the utility of nuclear weapons remains limited to defensive deterrence. Recognizing this, the US and South Korea should have no reason to expect the DPRK to become increasingly provocative, even as Kim Jong-un continues to progress towards completing a nuclear-capable ICBM. Additionally, applying the judgment framework the US used to understand Pakistani intent for the development of nuclear weapons suggests that Kim Jong-un is not suicidal and has developed its nuclear weapons to be used primarily as defensive deterrents and tools to gain international and domestic prestige. Although deterrence has proven successful at negating the will of nuclear powers to fight one another to date, rationality may not always be enough to prevent a nuclear catastrophe from unfolding. The US must endeavor to clearly communicate its commitment to South Korea, and its desire for stability on the Korean Peninsula, to avoid unnecessary confrontation or a devastating miscalculation.

## **Recommendations**

### To the United States

- Although historical evidence suggests that the DPRK is unlikely to engage in escalated provocative behavior driven by their increasingly sophisticated nuclear arsenal, **the US should maintain its response plans with South Korea, bolster conventional military cooperation, and continue to provide robust reassurances of US extended deterrence** to the region.
- Additionally, this assessment suggests that **a limited “bloody nose” strike on the DPRK would be a provocative mistake** and would unnecessarily escalate tension with the DPRK.
- **Improved bilateral or multilateral communications with the DPRK** will reduce the risk of nuclear miscalculation.
- **Acknowledge internally that the DPRK is unlikely to relinquish its nuclear weapons** based on its concerns over sovereignty and regime change.
- **Provide additional reassurances to Kim Jong-un that the US does not seek regime change**, collapse or the forceful reunification of the Korean peninsula on any terms.
- **Prepare a strategy that emphasizes US extended deterrence**, containing the threat of DPRK-sourced proliferation and clear communication with allies and adversaries.
  - **Signal US-South Korea policies for responding to any DPRK provocations** to reduce the likelihood of nuclear miscalculation and demonstrate the strength of the US-South Korea alliance.

### To the Republic of Korea

- **Maintain the existing defensive posture of the South Korean military** and review provocation response plan with the US.
- **Avoid cleavage between South Korean and US messaging to the DPRK** to limit the chances of alliance decoupling or miscommunication.
- **Reassure Kim Jong-un that South Korea does not seek the forceful reunification** of the Korean peninsula nor the collapse of the Kim regime.

### To the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

- Note that Pakistan’s post-nuclear experiences suggest that the **DPRK’s nuclear weapons will be useful only as tools of defensive deterrence**.
- A nuclear miscalculation would be devastating to the DPRK and the Kim regime and thus should be avoided at all costs by **establishing stronger communication mechanisms with the US and South Korea**.



## **South Korean Perspectives and Priorities in Defensive Military Options: Between the US and China—the Case of THAAD**

Cheng Zhang

In September 2017, South Korea announced the deployment of the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. This decision is a reflection of South Korea's perception of the threat posed by the latest developments of the North Korean nuclear program; it also sheds light on South Korea's positions and priorities in relation to United States and China.

It is crucial to understand the different factors and dynamics shaping how the THAAD deployment decision was made because it sheds light on how South Korea might consider defensive military options against North Korea going forward. Therefore, from the case of THAAD, this paper tries to explain how South Korean interests in the Korean Peninsula conflict are aligned with that of the two powers in the region, China and the US. To this end, this paper first reviews South Korea-China bilateral security interactions both before and after the deployment of THAAD. Then the paper examines the unequal dynamics of US-South Korean alliance by illustrating the goals, potential benefits and consequences of deploying US defensive military options for the two allies separately. Looking forward, game theory is used as a framework of analysis to identify three specific conditions under which cooperative solutions to break out of the security dilemma could be possible. In order to create these favorable conditions, the paper makes recommendations for South Korea, the US, and China.

### **Conflicting and Aligned Interests**

#### South Korea and China

##### *South Korea's Position and Perspectives*

After the Cold War, economic integration between China and South Korea increased. China and South Korea have also been cooperating over the Korean Peninsula security issue. The deployment of THAAD destabilized Sino-South Korean relations and met with severe diplomatic and economic opposition from China. The “three no's”—no additional THAAD deployment, no participation in the US's missile defense network, and no establishment of a trilateral military alliance with the US and Japan, are seen as South Korean efforts to reassure China.

That being said, South Korean policy preferences regarding economic and political cooperation with China and their implications for US-Korean relations appear to be considered independently of one another (Moore 2008, 1-29). This implies that South Korea is likely to have based its decision on its own judgement of the rapidly-changing Northeast Asia situation. To extrapolate from this assumption, South Korea seems likely to adopt an equidistant diplomatic stance between China and the United States if its interests significantly diverge from those of the US. For this reason, China's perspective is becoming more important in order to understand South Korea's decision-making.

*China's Position and Perspectives*

From China's perspective, THAAD is not necessary to achieve the goal of defending South Korea from the North Korean nuclear threat. As some experts have illustrated, China's concerns about THAAD stem from the deployment of the TPY-2 radar, rather than the interceptor itself. This is because US collection of Chinese warhead data would undermine China's nuclear deterrence (Li Bin 2016). While South Korea sees THAAD as a purely defensive military option, China believes that THAAD has an offensive capability, because the radar enables the US to collect and potentially act on data regarding the features and technical specifications of China's missiles. As the US government has explained, THAAD would not increase US capability because the US has had similar radars and sensor capability deployed in the region (Rose 2016). However, as outlined by Li Bin, "The THAAD radar to be deployed in the ROK would be in a very special position where it could view the back of the Chinese warheads flying over the northeast part of China when it is deployed to watch missiles from North Korea" (Li Bin 2016). That is to say, by being able to "view the back" of Chinese missiles, the radar enables the US to discriminate decoys from warheads. This greatly undermines China's deterrence because it might lower US perception of China's strengths. It particularly worries China because such a capability was previously unavailable to the US. Because the US and China hold different perceptions of the degree to which these radars have an offensive rather than a purely defensive role, South Korea and China have different understanding on how serious the security dilemma is, driving different actions or reactions.

*Relationship Before and After the Deployment of THAAD*

The decision that South Korea made to deploy THAAD is not solely based on the trade-off between economic and security interest. It is arguably South Korea's prioritizing US alliance security over Northeast Asian long-term regional security. Some scholars have argued that South Korea's bilateral relationship between China and the United States is not mutually-exclusive and should not be a zero-sum game (Kim and Cha 2016, 101-121). That said, South Korea's delicate balance between the two powers had not been maintained easily. Before the deployment of THAAD, South Korea and China had been cooperating on bilateral security issues. For example, China usually conducted its missile flight tests in an east-west direction, in order to minimize South Korea's perceived threat from China's missile activities. Reciprocally, South Korean reluctance to deploy THAAD grew out of the concern that this new buildup in military capacity might create concerns regarding China's strategic security. Both countries have been behaving in a self-restrained manner, which contributed to regional stability in the long-run (Li Bin 2016).

China and South Korea have been collectively seeking a cooperative solution to the security dilemma. However, in recent interactions between the two players, South Korea disregarded China's concerns. This was shown in South Korea's decision to deploy THAAD despite its awareness that the military build-up in North East Asia due THAAD could impair the strategic security interests of China and further increase tensions in the region.

According to game theory, one party may defect from a cooperative action when its discount factor (i.e., denoting how much a future payoff is valued at the current period) is small. South Korea's small discount factor is due to the nature of its electoral political system. Therefore, ex-president Park Geun-hye decided to deploy THAAD with the underlying consideration that her administration might not be re-elected (i.e., having a small discount factor in the game). Park's short-term move will have long-term consequences; however, she did not incorporate the future risks into her political decision. With this short-run thinking, the threat perceived by South Korea from a growing North Korean nuclear program is so imminent that it looms larger than the threat it perceived from an increasingly unstable Northeast Asia region.

#### Relations Between South Korea and the US

The other reason that ultimately drove South Korea to deploy THAAD, apart from self-protection from an aggressive neighbor, was pressure from its US ally. However, the United States and South Korea have incompatible goals, benefits and consequences in the game.

#### *Divergent Goals for South Korea and the US regarding THAAD Deployment*

Beyond protecting US allies (particularly Japan) from North Korean nuclear threats, the other important goal of the US defense system in this region is to defend US allies (particularly Japan) from potential Chinese missile attacks (Collina 2012, 29).

However, THAAD is not necessary to achieve the goal of defending South Korea from the North Korean nuclear threat. First of all, South Korea's densely populated capital, Seoul, is not protected by THAAD because Seoul is highly vulnerable to a conventional attack from across the Demilitarized Zone. There are other feasible measures to enhance the protection of Seoul. One report from the US Department of Defense indicated that one option for South Korea is to deploy lower-tier missile systems like the Patriot Missile instead of THAAD, which provides upper-tier defense (US Department of Defense, 1999).

If the US goal was a defensive deployment, but Seoul is not protected, then it is fair to argue that the purpose of the THAAD system is more to deter China than to protect South Korea. Therefore, with a potential military build-up in the region, THAAD deployment raises rather than eases tension in the Korean Peninsula.

#### *Divergent Benefits and Consequences for South Korea and the US regarding THAAD Deployment*

The potential consequences of deploying THAAD include the costs that each country has to bear in the event of increasing conflict due to the deployment. The US government has discussed the possibility of launching a pre-emptive or preventive strike towards North Korea. However, for South Korea the consequences will be an all-out-war because North Korea is likely to retaliate, perhaps with nuclear weapons. Because of the geographical proximity of South Korea and North Korea, South Korea bears a heavy cost. And with the level of maturity

of North Korea's nuclear weapon programs and short-range missiles, the entire territory of South Korea will be at the forefront of the conflict. Given the current developmental stage of the North Korean missiles, the chance that North Korea's long-range nuclear-tipped missiles could successfully launch an attack on US homeland is relatively small. Therefore, with the deployment of missile defense system in South Korea, US home land security is strengthened while South Korea bears most of the costs.

### **Looking Forward: Conclusion and Policy Implications**

#### *Game Theory: Three Conditions for Potential Cooperation*

Going forward, how can we create the conditions to move away from the security dilemma in the Korean Peninsula? The Prisoner's Dilemma provides a game-theoretic framework for stakeholders in the Korean Peninsula crisis to conceptualize and apply to regional dynamics in order to move towards potential solutions.

First, all players need to expect to repeat the game for infinite number of rounds. This is a challenging condition to meet, particularly in the context of a nuclear crisis, because the mass destruction of nuclear weapons provides an incentive for players in the game to compete rather than cooperate. In order to meet this condition, players should build trust in the long-run. Since the game process between North Korea and the international community at large is most likely to last for more than 4 years, strategic measures have to be taken to mitigate the effects of election cycle.

Second, both parties must have a large discount factor. Having a larger discount factor means that policy makers will be prudent in their near-term actions in light of potential outcomes from future interactions with the other participants. Unfortunately, the modern political electoral system poses a natural hurdle to fulfill this condition. Under such a political system, a particular administration bears a risk of not getting to the second round of the game at all, so they are almost always incentivized to make decisions that generate payoffs during their respective political terms.

Third, both players have to know the actual result of each round of interaction. This requires a higher level of transparency and information sharing mechanism on the Peninsula. In order to break out from the deadlock, both parties need to implement Trust-Building Measures. It is both in China's capability and interest to play a constructive role.

### **Recommendations**

#### To the US Government

- **Refrain from militant rhetoric and statements** that will worsen the security dilemma and hurt US credibility.
- **Offer to take North Korea off the State Sponsors of Terrorism List** as the first gesture to ease tension. President Trump returned North Korea to the list in November 2017, which was described by Rex Tillerson as "only..." because including North Korea on this list adds to the complexity of lifting US sanctions against North Korea.

- Therefore, removing North Korea from the list is also conducive to lifting sanctions and paving the way for any negotiation (Mason and Brunnstrom 2017).
- **Do not add on new types of sanctions and propose tentative reduction on US unilateral sanctions as a positive inducement** to North Korea in exchange for freezing their nuclear testing.
  - **Conduct a cost-benefit analysis on lifting unilateral sanctions** (those imposed due to the North Korean nuclear program) and later disclose the study's results. This will demonstrate how many US unilateral sanctions could be lifted and the potential impact they will have on the North Korean economy. This would send the message of a tentative reduction on US unilateral sanctions against North Korea as a positive inducement to North Korea.

#### To the Chinese Government

- Take a more **proactive role in establishing a multilateral communication channel on security issues**. This channel is necessary to reach consensus on shifting from absolute security and alliance-based collective defense to North East Asian regional common security. Minimize **the danger of miscalculations** resulting from the perceived security dilemma.
- **Lead cooperation on nuclear security and nonproliferation issues**. If North Korea's nuclear program proliferates in the Northeast Asian region, China is among the countries that will suffer the worst consequences. China and South Korea should establish bilateral security cooperation on nuclear safety to prevent the environmental and social consequences of a potential North Korean nuclear accidents.
- **Make use of trilateral cooperation mechanisms among China, South Korea and Japan**. These include various existing mechanisms under the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat).

#### To the Republic of Korea Government

- **Initiate the establishment of track 1.5 (officials acting in their personal capacity) or track 2 (non-governmental actors) dialogues**. Even under dire political circumstances between South Korea and North Korea, exchanges between civilian experts on disaster control and other humanitarian issues remain vital (SAIS group meeting, Seoul, 25 January 2018). Multitrack dialogue is crucial. This is aimed at having a consistent policy among the independent expert community and mitigating adverse effects of a change in political leadership. These experts may come from academia or non-governmental organizations. Continuity is crucial in trust-building measures. The discontinuity in North Korea policy and unification policy worsens the communication on these issues. Despite changes in political leadership, they can form a foundation on which trust can be built, perceptions exchanged and can foster mutual understanding.

- **Promote constructive dialogue in the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism Working Group (NAPSM).** This working group, along with 4 other working groups, was established during the Fifth Rounds of the Six-Party Talks in 2007. However, since their creation, they have operated separately from the Six-Party Talks (Six-Party Talks, 2007). Therefore, even though the Six-Party Talks have been interrupted, there might be a role for this working group mechanism to continue its work.

## **Part IV: Perspectives from East Asian Regional Actors**



## China in the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Yinchen Yan

The danger of the North Korean nuclear crisis derives from not only the nuclear testing *per se*, which is already terrifying and threatening to regional, even global stability and security. Without good communications and careful handling, US-China relations can quickly deteriorate from accidental skirmishes to tension escalation, which will by no means be constructive in solving the nuclear crisis, if not accelerating the outbreak of a major war.

While there are few, if any, arguments about China's importance in the North Korean nuclear crisis, the contention over China's policy priority is pronounced. China finds itself caught between denuclearization and assuring the survival of the Kim regime, especially in the face of dual threats of steadily progressing nuclear testing and a tough US attitude that threatens military strikes that can largely disturb the regional stability. So far there has been no final conclusion about how China will resolve these dilemmas.

Based on reflections over China's concerns and interests, its performance in observing the international economic sanctions, and the contingency plans, this essay advocates US-China cooperation on furthering the economic pressure on North Korea by tackling its overseas networks for financing and procurement, as well as developing joint contingency plans. This will not only maintain and even improve the current level of pressure on North Korea, but it will also benefit bilateral communication and mutual trust-building that can alleviate and even diffuse tensions between these two great powers.

### **China's Concerns and Interests**

#### Contrasting Wisdoms on China's View of North Korea

China is often conventionally considered unwilling to push North Korea towards denuclearization because of its own insecurities, such as the foreseeable inflow of refugees at the border if the Kim regime collapses, and the indispensability of North Korea as a buffer state between China and South Korea, a key US ally (Mastro 2018). A more optimistic approach, in contrast, views the China-North Korea relations as unprecedentedly deteriorating since the succession of Kim Jong-un. The closure of the Sino-North Korean Friendship Bridge in Dandong, the main road connection at the border, is often taken as a proof of the deteriorated relations, despite the Chinese Foreign Ministry's statement that the link will reopen when maintenance work is finished (Zhen 2017). To study China's real view about North Korea, one should bear in mind that the policy is not static, but evolving, flexible, and even hidden behind the rhetoric.

#### Evolving Policies and Domestic Debates

The control over public discussion, however, has been again loosened, as there are increasing articles in China's domestic policy journals questioning the official line on dealing with

North Korea, and the debates even spill over to social media platforms. Criticism over North Korean policy is not rare or mild, and some scholars even explicitly advocate siding with the United States (US) to deal with “a North Korea with nuclear weapons (as a) collective” problem. (Zhu 2017). The loosened control is considered a “virtual admission” of the previous policy failure and an effort at seeking a new one (Buckley 2017; Clover 2018). The current policy seems to follow the advice of those who are more hawkish against North Korea, as Chinese governmental advisers urge China to prepare for war (Wu 2017), and a state-run newspaper in Jilin, the province adjacent to North Korea, published advice on self-protection from a nuclear attack or explosion (NBC News 2017).

The divided voices within the Chinese academic field reflect the division among nationalists, conservatives and liberals among the decision makers, and China’s observation of the international economic sanctions, can be considered as a temporary victory by the “hawks”. Yet the current dominance is not equal to a final policy choice, and the trend of siding with other countries is not irreversible. The re-emergence of voices advocating seeking and preserving friendly relations with North Korea for its value as a buffer zone should be taken as a signal that the Chinese government may still remain ambivalent among different options (Shi 2018).

#### Is North Korea an Asset or Liability for China?

This essay considers North Korea a credible threat to China, while fully acknowledging the dilemma faced by the Chinese government in dealing with the problem. Firstly, despite the seemingly friendly gesture made by North Korea prior to and during the PyeongChang Olympics, its nuclear weapons research is progressing. The latest commercial satellite imagery in February 2018 indicates steady North Korea progress towards the operationalization of the Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) at the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center. The steam/vapor emanating from the generator hall of the 5 MW reactor is suggestive of “at least partial recent operations” of the plutonium production reactor (Pabian, Bermudez, and Liu 2018). Therefore, even if China supports inter-Korean dialogue and a peaceful solution, it would be impossible to eliminate the possibility that the thawing attitude is merely a tactic to buy time.

Secondly, nuclear proliferation is not the sole threat posed by North Korea. In fact, given China’s explicit warning that no aid would be given if North Korea launches missiles threatening the US (Denyer and Erickson 2017), the North is assumed to be particularly cautious about using nuclear weapons unless an all-out war breaks out. Instead, China should be alert to North Korean possession of non-nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the possibility of their proliferation by international transfer, which is a policy option for the Kim regime to obtain hard currency to shore up the economy or to buy the loyalty of potential rival elites (Terrell 2017).

Furthermore, if the Kim regime, the stability of which has long been suspect, collapses, it will bring the most adverse consequences to China: a mass flow of North Korea refugees into

heavily Korean ethnic areas at the border, causing unprecedented economic burden, hygiene and health challenges, and social unrest that would severely disturb regional stability and prosperity (Aum 2017). If so, long-lasting Chinese sanctions against North Korea cannot be expected. The US should thus take the responsibility to convince China that, first, the North Korean nuclear and WMD threats have to be addressed jointly, and second, that there should be a workable contingency plan to forestall a humanitarian crisis if the worst situation occurs.

### Why the United States Matters

Both China and the US are key players in de-escalating the North Korean crisis, and while both sides fully acknowledge the importance of each other, there are always two contrasting policy options for these potential cooperators and adversaries. The US has formidable influence on China's North Korean policy, (even though it may not be consistent with the US intention). A Chinese source explains that "Xi ignored the PyeongChang Olympics and had eyes on Donald Trump alone. That's clear from China's diplomatic actions on the day of the opening ceremony" (Nakazawa 2018).

There are several points relevant to US that worry China. China has been very negative about possible US military operations on the Peninsula, at least in its official statements (Huang 2018). The US military presence and potential expansion in Northeast Asia has long been bothering the Chinese government (Shi 2018), and an anti-missile exercise in 2017 in Beijing in cooperation with Russia is considered to be aimed at countering US alliances in the region (Huang 2017).

Apart from that, multilateral pressures can be dangerous, in the sense that the appeal by the international community for a tougher Chinese policy against North Korea can counterproductively push China towards North Korea. China may take it as a signal of the US' and its allies' intention to expand their influence and military presence on the Peninsula, which is one of China's main concerns in the region (Shi 2018). Furthermore, China is highly sensitive about being excluded from the international solutions, illustrated by its denouncement against a 20-nation meeting in Vancouver in the beginning of 2018, where tougher sanctions and military options were raised (Huang 2018; Leng 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 17 January 2018).

### Implications for Great Powers

While China is wary of expanded US military presence in the region, the US may worry about secret Chinese support for the Kim regime out of fear of negative consequences if the regime collapses, as discussed above. Some even suspect China of employing the nuclear crisis to maximize its strategic interests, as Trump's war rhetoric results in the decline of US leadership and the tarnishing of US reputation in the region, especially among its allies (Lee 2017). China thus has little motivation, if any, to cooperate with the US.

Other potential sources of conflicts lie outside the Korean Peninsula, such as the South China Sea disputes, trade issues, and other conflicts that are not uncommon between the two

great powers. Although North Korea is not the sole issue in the US-China bilateral relationship, both sides should develop a consensus that a nuclearized North Korea is an impeding threat of high (if not the highest) priority, and the collective problem requires joint efforts, including economic sanctions and contingency plans. Both sides should be fully aware that unilateral actions without the support from each other will either fail to pressure North Korea or largely compromise the effect. Therefore, to maintain a non-hostile relation is one of the key points in denuclearizing the North. Escalation of the US-China confrontation will increase North Korea's geopolitical value for China and thus compromise the Chinese support for international sanctions and any other action.

Two recommendations are given to maintain and facilitate non-hostile relations between China and the US. First, disputes on issues other than the nuclear crisis can be postponed for later negotiation. President Trump once employed this tactic when he delayed taking trade action against China to win Xi's support for the United Nations sanctions against North Korea (Siegel 2017). Second, both sides should make efforts to clarify their goals and bottom lines, in order to avoid an accidental skirmish and subsequent escalation, and actively seek common ground. The US administration, according to reports in early 2018, has been on the right track in convincing China of the nuclear threat and offering assurance to the Chinese leadership of the limited mandate for US forces in any military action that might develop (Sanger 2017; Hayward 2018).

### **China's Observance of the International Economic Sanctions**

Although having received much criticism for previous loose implementation of international economic sanctions, China has made many authenticated efforts that deserve applause and recognition. The importation of coal, iron, lead, aluminum have been halted, and the exports from North Korea fell 16 percent and imports are down 62 percent (Bloomberg News 2017). Recent observations show a sharp increase in North Korean market prices, for which China could take the credit (at least partly) (Silberstein 2017). The latest report illustrates a continuous fall in the bilateral trade, down 52 percent from the previous year's period and 31 percent month-to-month (Zhou 2018), which responds to suspicion about a loosening implementation of sanctions by the Chinese side.

However, the licit trade with China is by no means the only economic pillar that supports the Kim regime, and satisfactory data are not necessarily suggestive of the success of sanctions in promoting denuclearization. A more careful look into the North Korean foreign business, such as its alternate partner and the financing and procurement system, will facilitate the international community's understanding of the complexity of economic sanctions, their effectiveness, and another feasible approach, for which a continuously cooperative China is needed.

Firstly, China is not the sole trade partner and energy supplier to North Korea, and not the sole potential spoiler, as suspected by some politicians (Nelson 2018). Instead, Russian tankers

were found to transfer fuel to North Korea on at least three occasions in 2017 (Faulconbridge, Saul, and Nikolskaya 2017). Corresponding measures have to be taken.

Secondly, critics that attacked China for not having done enough, such as completely cutting off its oil supply to North Korea (Nelson 2018), ignored the fact that North Korea may not be threatened by the suggested proposal because of its newly obtained technology to replace oil with other indigenous sources of hydrocarbons (Noel 2017). Apart from that, the stockpiles of oil will likely go to the highly prioritized nuclear program, so that no immediate halt should be expected (Zhao 2017). Even if the embargo on oil shipping is jointly implemented in an effective way, with full support from China, North Korea will not be likely to collapse.

Given the analysis above, instead of pressuring China to completely cut off oil supply, sanctions should be designed in a more sophisticated way, for which the study of North Korean systems of financing and procurement sheds some light: apart from holding on to the current sanctions, the international community should go further and target on the key nexus that supports the regime—North Korean overseas networks that the Kim regime has employed to maintain access to hard currency and material (Thompson 2017; C4ADS and Sejong Institute 2017). Despite the secrecy and good disguise, the system is found vulnerable because of its highly centralized and limited nature: the networks are centralized around key entities and individuals, and closely interconnected, concentrating within just 5233 companies (Thompson 2017). Dandong Hongxiang Industrial Development Co. Ltd. (DHID), having acted on behalf of a sanctioned North Korean financial entity and having conducted over US \$500 million in North Korea trade from 2011 to 2016, was taken down by a joint action of China and the US (Thompson 2017). This case challenges the common misunderstanding that such illicit trade is untraceable and invulnerable to intervention, and highlights the indispensable role of China in taking down such entities under licit disguise.

However, the above-mentioned DHID case in fact drew much criticism toward China since the company is based on Chinese territories, and the Chairwoman, Ma Xiaohong, is a Chinese citizen. Similarly, in an earlier case of weapons trafficking to North Korea by the ship *Jieshun*, the key figure, Fan Mintian, was also a Chinese national. It is thus reasonable for the international community to China's willingness to pressure North Korea further in a sincere and sustainable way and carry out relevant investigations. Yet China cannot be arbitrarily classified and treated as the enemy of the international community in denuclearizing North Korea question (Horton, Lee Myers, and Schwirtz 2018). As illustrated above, hostile attitudes claiming that China will ultimately side with North Korea against the US are likely to push, even force China to return to its earlier strategic calculation that prioritizes the importance of North Korea as a buffer zone, the collapse of which may lead the US to move its troops to the Chinese border. If so, the joint efforts on denuclearizing North Korea will be inevitably compromised in the face of a perceived threat. Worse, China's siding with North Korea can be a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy.

## **Contingency Plans**

China's contingency plan in response to the dynamics on the Korean Peninsula is important not only for its function in facilitating a swifter reaction to any change, but also because it is indicative of China's main concerns and pursuit, which, if consistent or can be accommodated with the US agenda, could even serve as the basis for the cooperation with US in solving the nuclear crisis.

### The Current Contingency Plans

Chinese contingency planning in the event of a collapse of the regime in North Korea centers on three aspects: humanitarian concerns, nuclear accidents, and geopolitical shift on the Peninsula (Kowalewski 2017). First, in response to the expected refugee inflow, China is likely to keep the problem outside its territory by sending the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops and the People's Armed Police (PAP) across the border to set up a temporary "buffer zone" in North Korea to prevent refugee migration, as well as to keep the order and forestall turbulence (Aum 2017). Second, early entrance into North Korea is also of vital importance in controlling the nuclear material, weapons and WMDs. Noticeably, on the second task, China and US share the common ground of forestalling nuclear/WMD proliferation, and they can cooperate in both naval patrols and land interdiction to prevent the proliferation of materials, technology, and associated personnel (Kowalewski 2017).

Similarly, the US-ROK Combined Forces Command has also developed military plans if regional instability occurs, yet no joint plans have been developed with China. Despite the shared interests in forestalling nuclear/WMD proliferation, the two major powers may find themselves in a dangerously escalated conflict in the regime collapse scenario, because of the lack of consensus over what constitutes the threshold for activation if needed (Aum 2017). Given the divergent interests and the mutual mistrust in each other's objectives, either party's intervention, without the endorsement of its legitimacy by the other side, can be deemed taking advantage of the instability to advance one's own interests. For example, China's taking initiative to intervene in a regime collapse scenario will be suspicious of installing a North Korean function regime or absorbing the territory (Aum 2017), which will incur a tough response and a consequent confrontation.

### A Joint Contingency Plan

A danger foreseen is usually half harmful, and the possible conflict can be reduced by better communication on the contingency plan. China can start from clarifying its preparedness, commitment and capability to mobilize forces for both humanitarian and stabilization missions upon a regime collapse, so as to moderate massive US mobilization northward, which will be consistent with its interests in countering US military expansion on the Peninsula (Lindsay 2016). In case US and South Korean troops participate in the intervention, clear lines of separation and limitations on how far they could push to the north will minimize the chance of accidental skirmishes that can quickly escalate (Kowalewski 2017; Lindsay 2016).

Furthermore, the US-China cooperation on securing WMD will be beneficial for both sides (Lindsay 2016).

The joint contingency planning will not only prepare the major powers for the future dynamics, but it will also foster a good basis for mutual trust on achieving denuclearization. Cooperation can also minimize, even eliminate the possibility of accidental skirmishes with the US. Although Chinese officials used to resist conversations about such cooperation, analysts point out that this may not represent a firm opposition to the joint action per se, but more likely is intended to preclude information leakage and to retain China's leverage in negotiating with North Korea (Sanger 2017; Reuters 2017). This should not discourage US from seeking opportunities for cooperation. The current situation seems to be hopeful (Garamone 2017). Together with the denunciation against North Korea, Chinese academics have publicly broached the idea of a shared contingency plan with the US (Reuters 2017), which was said to echo the opinions of some officials in the foreign affairs sector. Moreover, hours after North Korea's nuclear test in November 2017, the US and Chinese generals took part in an "unusual set of security talks" which focused on the communication between US and Chinese militaries during a crisis, and the enhancement of mutual trust (Huang and Zhou 2017).

### **New Dynamic: A Possible Trump-Kim Meeting**

Although the PyeongChang Olympics served as a herald for a warming de-escalation on the Peninsula, the announcement of President Trump's acceptance of a potential meeting with Kim on denuclearization is unexpected. In response, China is strongly supportive of the meeting publicly, stating that the proposed meeting is "consistent with China's long-standing stance" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 9 March 2018). The de-escalation and the diminishing likelihood of a US military strike is in China's interests in preserving the regional stability (Bader 2018; Tiezzi 11 March 2018). Yet the breakthrough, where China is generally considered a less important player, if not an outsider, compared with the US, North Korea, and South Korea, is worrisome for Beijing since "the Chinese have virtually no control over this process ... even very little input" (Tiezzi 11 March 2018). This view is echoed by China's domestic academic voice that the marginalization of China's role in the proposed US-DPRK meeting may indicate a more fundamental shift of North Korean policy to be more pro-US and deviant, if not against China (Wang 2018).

Another stream of views, in contrast, defends China's contribution to the de-escalation and unalterable importance in the future denuclearization. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in his press conference, emphasized that China's earlier proposal of a "dual freeze" (in which North Korea suspends nuclear testing while the US and South Korea suspend the joint military exercises) was an effective prescription that contributes to the thaw (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 8 March 2018; Tiezzi 9 March 2018). An editorial in the *Global Times*, which is often considered the Chinese government's mouthpiece,

explicitly opposed the marginalization theory, arguing that it was “not possible for one of China’s neighbors to completely rely on Washington” (Global Times 2018).

The public statement can always be a face-saving approach that disguises Beijing’s unawareness of the latest update, yet China’s lackluster performance in this round does not necessarily indicate a decreasing Chinese role. If China is not kept on board with US policy to North Korea, and the marginalization proceeds to the extent that China feels compelled to counter an expanding US regional influence (and to compensate for its relatively declining influence), its current strict imposition of economic sanctions could loosen dramatically (Bader 2018), putting the international community at a disadvantage in future negotiations with North Korea.

### **Conclusion**

China’s North Korean policy is not static but is evolving and under outside influence, such as US policies. China’s observation of the international economic sanctions and domestic academics’ support for cooperation with the US on the denuclearization indicates Chinese willingness to consider cooperation.

China may reverse its policy if it perceives the US to be hostile and ambitious in expanding its regional military presence, which will again highlight the strategic value of North Korea as a buffer state between Chinese territory and the US army. If so, China will likely come to North Korea’s defense.

Effective economic pressure over North Korea needs international cooperation on identifying and dealing with spoilers, improving the sanctions implementation, and ensuring international compliance with the sanctions.

China could benefit from a joint contingency plan with the US to address humanitarian and non-proliferation issues more effectively. Communication and cooperation will also facilitate trust-building to lower the chance for accidental skirmishes and escalation if intervention is taken on the Peninsula.

The proposal of a Trump-Kim meeting tentatively scheduled for May 2018 may indicate a marginalized China, but China remains an important country with formidable influence in the region.

### **Recommendations**

#### To the Chinese Government

- The **international economic sanctions should be persistently observed**, which will serve as the basis for international cooperation on denuclearization and create mutual trust with the US.
- If a long-term standoff and continued economic sanctions are expected, local business entities at the border (Dandong), the companies or individual merchants that used to live on trades with North Korea, should be taken care of by the local government. An

- economic transition**, despite the predictable difficulties, **should be planned to forestall massive smuggling business**.
- Given the substantial progress of North Korean nuclear research, **China should** admit the failure of its early policies, and **view a foreseeably nuclearized North Korea as an impending threat that needs collective actions**, starting from an open discussion of joint contingency planning with the US.
  - **Close monitoring over the nuclear test progress of North Korea** is necessary for updating the contingency plans.

To the US Government

- To win a more cooperative China on dealing with denuclearization, the **US should recognize and encourage China's efforts to observe the international economic sanctions**.
- The **US should keep on actively seeking cooperation with China on a joint contingency plan in response to any dynamics on the Peninsula**.
- Apart from the North Korea issue, other **contentious issues and conflicts between the two great powers can be postponed for later negotiations** so as to maintain and foster a non-hostile bilateral relationship.
- Even if the proposal for the Trump-Kim meeting proceeds, the US should **be mindful of China's regional influence**. Marginalizing and antagonizing China can alter China's determination to observe economic sanctions, and even drive China back toward North Korea.



## **Russian Perspectives and Interests on the Korean Peninsula**

Chris Barnes

The conflict on the Korean Peninsula between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) is singularly unique among conflicts around the world, in that it has been frozen for decades but has still experienced periods of extreme tension between the two sides. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, the DPRK found itself orphaned from its theretofore chief sponsor, and no longer under the protection of its nuclear umbrella. Thus, Pyongyang began a program to develop its own nuclear deterrent, which has continued at varying speeds and efficacies ever since.

Thus far, efforts by the United States (US) government to bring an end to this program, either through bilateral and multilateral negotiations with the DPRK or through economic pressure in the form of multilateral sanctions, have failed to thwart Pyongyang's quest to achieve a nuclear weapons capability, as its recent nuclear and missile tests have demonstrated. Washington's current posture toward the DPRK is one of "maximum pressure" through economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation in hopes that Pyongyang will be so overcome with suffering that it will yield to the demands of the US and denuclearize in exchange for some measure of relaxation of this pressure.

However, this strategy is unlikely to produce the desired result as long as the US fails to recognize the interests, and to properly incentivize the actions, of a key player on the Korean Peninsula and in the Korean nuclear dilemma: the Russian Federation. Hence this chapter will explore Moscow's evolving perspective on the conflict and the positions it has taken regarding the nuclear issue. It will explore the motivations for these positions at various points throughout the conflict, as well as Russian interests on the peninsula. It will highlight issues which are not directly related to the conflict but which factor into Moscow's calculations about how it deals with the various players. Finally, it will conclude with recommendations for the United States government on how to work with Russia to achieve a stable, peaceful, and denuclearized Korean Peninsula while still protecting their own separate interests.

### **Russia as Peacemaker**

Ever since the George W. Bush administration sought, as a way of breaking with the preceding administration's strategy of bilateral negotiations with the DPRK, to create a multilateral mechanism in the form of the Six-Party Talks for resolving the Korean nuclear issue, the Russian Federation has striven to secure its seat at the negotiating table in order to exert some level of influence on the course of those interactions. Throughout much of those talks in the mid-2000s, Moscow's position largely mirrored that of Beijing: their foremost concern was the preservation of stability on the Korean Peninsula. Although the nuclear issue played a large part of that concern, Washington's propensity at that time for regime change, particularly following President Bush's inclusion of North Korea in his 2002 "Axis of Evil" speech,

followed by the 2003 invasion of Iraq, meant that Russia and China, not to mention South Korea, were most concerned about a similar action from a cavalier and reckless Bush administration.

Through successive US presidential administrations, Moscow has adhered to the stability-first position, and indeed has opposed a pressure and sanctions-oriented strategy against the DPRK, led by the ROK and US. Though Russia “basically supports” United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions against the Kim regime, it opposes bilateral sanctions and intense pressure for fear that those could trigger a collapse of the North Korean regime and a humanitarian disaster (Hyun 2017, 2). Prominent Russian think tanks have downplayed the efficacy of sanctions against the DPRK, such as when the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) sarcastically characterized the “unprecedented regime of sanctions and isolation imposed on North Korea” as “the principle ‘achievement’ US diplomacy attained in the last few months (at the cost of an uncompromising dialogue with both allies and dissenters, including China and Russia)” (Toloraya 2018). Reacting to US sanctions applied to Russian entities and individuals whom the US Department of Treasury found to be in violation of sanctions against the DPRK (Torbaty 2017), Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov expressed Moscow’s disdain for sanctions in general: “Washington, in theory, should have learned that, for us, the language of sanctions is unacceptable; the solution of real problems is only hindered by such actions.” Ryabkov said, “so far, however, it does not seem that they have come to an understanding of such obvious truths” (Warrick 2017).

Thus Moscow, along with Beijing, seeks to provide a solution to the “real problem” of North Korea’s nuclear program by adopting two strategies: first, a dual strategy of halting North Korea’s nuclear and missile provocations and the ROK-US joint military exercises, the so-called “double freeze;” second, a dual-track effort at bringing about the denuclearization process and a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula (Hyun 2017, 2). Moscow has also enthusiastically supported the recent rapprochement between the two Koreas, in the form of humanitarian and sports exchanges, restoration of the communications hotline between the militaries of the two countries, and the confirmation from both parties that they would respect former agreements (Toloraya 2018). However, while Russia’s positions on these issues may seem altruistic, there is another factor which undoubtedly plays a role in Moscow’s calculations: its intent to reclaim Russia’s historical position among the world’s great powers.

### **Russia as Great Power**

Moscow’s desire to play peacemaker on the Korean Peninsula is a relatively new phenomenon, but it is not surprising given historical trends in Russian foreign policy. Russia is conducting its relationship with North Korea in much the same way as the Soviet Union did with its client states throughout the twentieth century, by building closer ties with its leadership and strengthening economic cooperation. Moreover, Moscow’s relatively soft touch with Pyongyang is likely intended to serve the dual purposes of reminding both the Russian public and the international community of Russia’s Great Power status—thus the Kremlin is able to

rally the public to support its policies while increasing Moscow's position as a legitimate alternative to US soft power capacity in the international arena (Ramani 2017).

Nor is Moscow's push for a settlement to the conflict incongruent with Russia's contemporary actions in other conflict zones around the world. At multiple points in the Syrian conflict, for instance, Moscow has been quick to offer diplomatic solutions to contentious issues, as in the 2013 chemical weapons disarmament deal, or in its creation of a multilateral forum in Astana for the various parties to that conflict to negotiate a peace agreement (Ramani 2017). Though it should be noted that the long- and even short-term efficacies of these solutions are somewhat murky—reports indicate the Assad regime was still using chemical weapons even after having supposedly destroyed or expelled its stockpiles, and the Astana forum amounted to effectively nothing regarding an actual peace agreement between the parties to the conflict—the point for the Kremlin is not how effective their solutions are but what kind of international headlines they generate.

Furthermore, these actions serve to reinforce the Kremlin's domestic narrative that it is, in a sense, Making Russia [a] Great [Power] Again by making its presence felt in the settlement processes of these conflicts. According to Samuel Ramani, who has extensively researched Kremlin messaging during international crises,

You can see this in the Russian state media's enthusiastic and oft-repeated coverage every time an international leader praises, however slightly, Moscow's involvement in the North Korean crisis. For instance, the Russian state media has repeatedly mentioned Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's consultation with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on the crisis and, has showcased public statements by leaders, like Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who have backed Russia's support for a political solution to the North Korean crisis (Ramani 2017).

“As Russia takes an increasingly assertive approach to world affairs,” Ramani says, “it reminds its citizens of the Soviet Union's status as a superpower that could influence conflicts worldwide” (Ramani 2017). Moscow's intention to further that aim in the context of North Korea has led it to develop closer political and economic ties with Pyongyang, but the true reason for this added closeness may be far more mundanely businesslike than the burgeoning aspirations of a resurgent great power—the simplest explanation, economics, is the most likely one.

### **Russia as Economic Opportunist**

It is true that Russia has lofty aspirations for its position on the international stage, but it is also likely true that Moscow knows a good deal when it sees one. Following Kim Jong-un's outreach to Putin through his second-in-command at the Sochi Olympics in 2014, Russia and North Korea signed just such a deal: an agreement to raise bilateral trade between the two countries from \$112 million to \$1 billion by 2020 (Luhn 2016). Russia also has the potential to develop substantial infrastructure-related projects in North Korea, including electricity supplies, trans-Korean energy pipelines and railway systems that could yield commercial

returns for both North Korea and Russia. Moscow has also shown interest in the prospects for trilateral economic projects with North and South Korea, such as the potential construction of a gas pipeline across the Korean Peninsula that would connect to Russia's Trans-Sib pipeline (Rinna 2017).

In reality, however, Russia's main economic benefit from closer ties with North Korea is not the relatively small DPRK-Russia trade volume, but the potential for Russian access through North Korea to markets in the Asia-Pacific. Furthermore, increasing and improving Russian Far East infrastructure interoperability with North Korea would also mean that goods from Japan and South Korea could be transported through North Korea and then Russia to Western markets (Park, Tan, and Govindasamy 2013, 133). This potential, according to Anthony Rinna, belies the reality of Russia's position regarding sanctions of North Korea:

While past sanctions did not specifically ban North Korea from participating in infrastructure projects, no amount of infrastructure between North Korea and Russia is going to yield a return for either country if the sale of goods or services requiring solid logistics support end up under sanction. A more extensive prohibition on North Korean trade in specific goods that it may wish to sell with via Russia-backed infrastructure would undermine Russia's incentive to pursue infrastructure projects with North Korea, undermining Russian opportunities for connection to the Korean Peninsula (Rinna 2017).

Thus the potential economic upside for Russia of stable and denuclearized (and unsanctioned) North Korea is substantial.

Moreover, Moscow is clearly willing to defend that potential, even in its most nascent form, as evidenced by Moscow's objection to a UNSC characterization of the missile that North Korea tested on July 4, 2017, as an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), despite both the US Department of Defense and the North Korean leadership claiming it to be so. "It is possible," writes Rinna "that Russia is delaying acknowledgment that North Korea did indeed successfully test an ICBM because doing so would lend extra urgency to the US agenda of cracking down economically on Pyongyang... undermining Russia's designs for economic cooperation with North Korea" (Rinna 2017).

It is in this manner that the US has seen Russia less as a potential partner in solving the Korean nuclear dilemma and instead as more of a self-interested and short-sighted actor seeking to profit from relations with an isolated rogue state. However, it may be that Moscow takes a longer view of events on the Korean Peninsula than Washington gives it credit for. Russian interests in the Korean Peninsula go back much further than American involvement in Northeast Asia, back to the Beijing Convention of 1860 in which Qing China ceded a large part of what is today Russia's Primorsky Krai to the Russian Empire, and after which the Russian Empire pursued its interests in Korea during the twilight of the Joseon Dynasty. Similarly, while the US is concerned with the short- to medium-term goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Russian planning for a post-division Korea likely goes back decades. In short, Moscow wants to be "primed to take full advantage of the prospect of unification,"

and Washington's inability to recognize Russia's unwillingness to impose sanctions that could undermine its geopolitical interests in Korea lie at the heart of their failure to see eye-to-eye on Pyongyang (Rinna 2017).

### **Conclusion**

Russia's position regarding the DPRK, sanctions, and denuclearization is at once nebulous and obtuse, while also rational and straightforward. In typical Russia fashion, Moscow does much to obfuscate its true intentions underlying any given calculation, statement, or action as pertains to the Korean Peninsula. The Kremlin can of course always be expected to act foremost to protect its own interests but determining what those interests are can be somewhat of a parlor game. However, based on the evidence, Moscow appears to be interested in three objectives in Northeast Asia: to burnish its credentials as an indispensable peacemaker; to bolster its claim to the status of Global Great Power; and above all, to further its own economic interests. What follows are ways in which Washington may be able to mitigate or even leverage those objectives in service to its own.

### **Recommendations**

#### To the United States

- **Recognize that Russian actions regarding North Korea, as in many other situations, are often taken out of deference to its own specific, and in this case relatively narrow, national interests**, rather than to a bipolar Cold War-style struggle for geopolitical influence with the US. Moscow undoubtedly has great-power aspirations and wishes to regain its historical position of prestige within a multi-polar world, but its concerns are first and foremost economic. Use this to your advantage in dealing with them. To wit:
- **Explore and if possible exploit the economic dimension in conducting relations with Russia vis-à-vis the DPRK.** Use Russia's interest in expanding its economic position on the Korean Peninsula to your advantage in getting Moscow to assist in resolving Northeast Asia security issues, particularly North Korean denuclearization.
- Come to terms with the fact that **Russia, or Russian citizens with the Kremlin's tacit approval, will act in their own economic interest and will maintain trade and labor ties with the DPRK, sanctions or no sanctions.** Diplomatically strive to impress upon Moscow that a peaceful, stable, and denuclearized Korean Peninsula has tremendous potential economic upside for the Russian Federation, and thus aligns with its national interests, whereas the status quo of DPRK's isolation and pariah status in the international community presents Russia with far fewer opportunities.
- **Play to Moscow's desire to be seen internationally as a great power and a global dealmaker, to its sensitivity to being crowded out of negotiations in which it believes it belongs, and (ever so gently) to its insecurity about its domestic political support.** Subtly hint, both in public and behind closed doors, that you are prepared to

make a deal with Pyongyang, with or without Moscow's involvement, and to the greatest extent possible, encourage the impression in the Kremlin that the US-DPRK settlement train may be about to leave the station. Further remind Moscow how good it will look on the Russian people's televisions back home when it is announced that Russia played a crucial role in solving a decades-old problem on its Far Eastern doorstep.

- **Make it clear to Moscow that you are not interested in or considering regime change in the DPRK.** This outcome is the Kremlin's worst-case scenario, and given Washington's previous actions in Iraq and Libya, it is a major obstacle to bringing the Kremlin on board with a negotiated solution to the denuclearization issue on the Korean Peninsula.
- **Understand that Russia is likely making plans over the long term for its own presence in a reunified Korea.** Quietly engage the Kremlin in low-level, but substantive discussions about the potential for a unified Korean Peninsula that economically benefits Russia, while also protecting security and economic interests of the US and its allies in the region.
- **Emphasize to Moscow that Pyongyang's recent improved behavior, vis-à-vis its suspension of nuclear and missile tests since November 2017 and its rapprochement with the ROK prior to and during the PyeongChang Olympics, are positive and welcome developments from the US perspective.** However, make it clear that a resumption of provocative behavior in the form of further nuclear and missile testing will return the DPRK to its previous status of diplomatic outcast, and **should such a resumption occur, Moscow will be held similarly responsible for its clear violations of UNSC-approved sanctions, with the attendant consequences.**

## **Japanese Perspectives and Influences in the Korean Crisis**

Zindzi Thompson

While Japan may not be considered a central actor within the context of the current nuclear crisis, its proximity to North Korea has made the regime's pursuit of nuclear weapons a salient issue among the Japanese. North Korea's determination to strengthen its nuclear capabilities has heightened the threat perception of stakeholders in the region and in the United States (US). Already, the North has successfully demonstrated its potential ability to launch ballistic missiles that can hit major Japanese and US population centers. In doing so, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has caused Japanese security interests to diverge from those of its key allies.

As the DPRK continues to improve its nuclear capabilities, Japan must consider the security implications related to the offensive capabilities of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF), the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella, and historical tensions with its Northeast Asian neighbors. Japan must not only balance its desire for a denuclearized DPRK with its reliance on US extended deterrence, but also consider other security threats from China and to a lesser extent, Russia. The limited independent military scope for maneuver implies that Japan is particularly sensitive to any changes in the regional security structure, including those that may lead to instability on the Korean peninsula. As such, Japan has taken a firm stance against North Korean nuclear ambitions by advocating for DPRK denuclearization. Through economic isolation, Japan hopes to force the DPRK to engage in talks that would lead the North to re-evaluate its nuclear strategy. Thus, this chapter will review the historical and contemporary factors that impact Japan's ability to navigate the current crisis and compel the DPRK to engage in negotiations.

### **Security Context**

After the end of World War II, Japan adopted a largely US-led 'peace' constitution in 1946 that limited its ability to wage war. Article 9 of the constitution, which is commonly known as the "no-war" clause, states that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation...land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained" (Hane 2013). This clause did not preclude Japan from engaging in self-defense, which paved the way for the creation of its de-facto military known as the Self Defense Force in 1954.

While the scope and offensive capabilities of the SDF has technically increased over the following decades, the SDF continues to operate within an obscure legal space, given the constitutional constraints. Notwithstanding, the SDF has largely taken a defensive posture or has been used to provide operational support in specific contexts. This is possible partly due to the US-Japanese alliance that was enhanced through the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which permits US military bases to be located within Japanese territory in exchange for US protection against external threats to Japan (Allen and Sugg 2016).

Historically, this resilient relationship has contributed to stability within the Asia-Pacific region by acting as a deterrent to revisionist states such as the DPRK, and by limiting the need for Japan to enhance its domestic offensive capabilities (which may threaten its neighbors and lead to escalation).

The DPRK nuclear weapons program, along with its stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons, currently poses the most acute security threat to Japan. Already, the DPRK has demonstrated that it has the ability to launch ballistic missiles over major Japanese cities. In 2017, North Korea test-launched its most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Hwasong-15, which is estimated to have the capacity to hit mainland US (see Figure 1). As a result, the DPRK’s increased technical prowess—particularly its newfound ability to threaten mainland US—has increased the potential divergence of interests between the US and Japan, given that there is an increased risk that the US can be placed in a position where it may have to choose between protecting the US mainland versus over-protecting US allies.

Unfortunately, Japan’s security concerns are not limited to challenges stemming from North Korea alone. China’s military modernization, space exploration and increasing regional influence, have also served to erode Japan’s overall security position in the region. Hence, DPRKs nuclear ambitions along with regional security concerns have direct implications for the credibility of US extended deterrence mechanism, and the role of Japan’s de facto military.

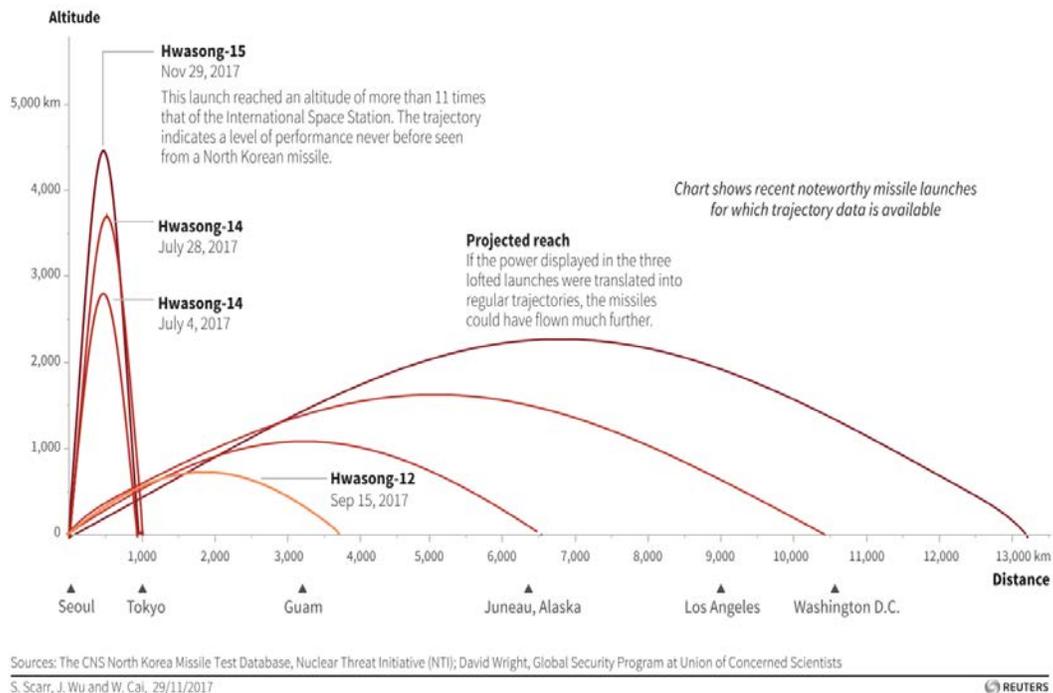


Figure 1: Projected Reach of the Hwasong-15 ICBM

### US Extended Deterrence

Prior to the Hwasong-15 missile test, any Japanese concern about the credibility of US nuclear extended deterrence largely stemmed from China's increasing military capabilities and closer relations with the US (Yoshihara and Holmes 2012). One can posit that if the US and China's political and economic relationship become more intertwined, the US may be less willing to defend Japan if it were attacked by China. Given that the US mainland is vulnerable to an attack from North Korea, Japan must now consider the extent to which the DPRK continues to perceive US extended deterrence as credible.

The US may now be faced with two choices if confronted with a potential attack from the DPRK: primary deterrence (where it defends itself against a direct attack) and extended deterrence obligations (where it upholds its commitments to defend Japan in the event of an attack). Kaufmann describes three requirements for credible deterrence: capability, cost and resolve (Yoshihara and Holmes 2012). Few would doubt the military capabilities of the US nor its capacity to impose significant costs to the DPRK. However, given the Hwasong-15 missile test, there is an increased risk that the DPRK may question the resolve of the US to fulfill its threats if the DPRK has the ability to attack a major US population center. Thus, even if Japan continues to be assured of the US commitment to the nuclear umbrella, the changed DPRK perception of US credibility may potentially lead the DPRK to escalate its threats against Japan, or to use threats against the US as a bargaining tool to facilitate negotiations.

Under this backdrop, the Trump administration renewed its commitment to the US nuclear umbrella in Asia within its 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. The US review clarifies four main objectives of US nuclear forces within its national security strategy: "deterrence of nuclear and non-nuclear attack; assurance of allies and partners; achievement of US objectives if deterrence fails; capacity to hedge against an uncertain future" (US Department of Defense 2018). As such, the review simultaneously reassures Japan about the US commitment to its allies, while raising the possibility that the US may be open to taking unilateral actions that may possibly risk instability in Japan. If the US is compelled to take actions to achieve its objectives if deterrence fails, a chasm between US and Japanese interests may open in which the US pursues denuclearization and its own safety at the cost of instability in the region and insecurity for Japan.

Still, the US nuclear umbrella serves to promote US interests by helping to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. A state under a nuclear umbrella is unlikely to pursue nuclear weapons development since a nuclear state provides for its security from external nuclear threats. Given that Japan is prohibited from maintaining domestic nuclear weapons as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the maintenance of the nuclear umbrella is crucial to Japanese security. However, one cannot ignore that the US presence in Japan also poses a threat to the DPRK. Hence, Japan must balance its need for the US nuclear extended deterrence with its desire for nuclear disarmament on the peninsula.

### Self-Defense Forces

Japan has one of the largest non-nuclear conventional armed forces in the world. The SDF is controlled by the Japanese Ministry of Defense and is comprised of over 300,000 troops. They work closely with the US Forces Japan, which are made up of about 40,000 troops (Holmes 2017), the majority of whom are stationed in Okinawa. For 2018, Japan allocated about US\$46 billion (Reynolds 2017) to its defense budget, which accounts for about 1% of the Japanese economy. Notwithstanding Japan's significant defense budget and military assets, the war-time capabilities of the SDF is unknown, given its limited combat experience and ability to conduct military exercises in high-residential density Japan (Economist Intelligence Unit 2008).

As North Korea continues to enhance its nuclear capabilities and threaten Japan, the Japanese government may come under increasing pressure to normalize the SDF. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is already determined to amend the 'peace' constitution by 2020 in order to legitimize the SDF. The proposed changes to the constitution are largely a technicality, since the parliament has previously addressed some of the limitations imposed by Article 9 of the constitution by passing legislation that helped to normalize Japan's military. For example, the SDF can participate in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations outside Japanese territory at the end of a conflict, give non-combatant support to the US military abroad, and protect US military facilities in Japan (Economist Intelligence Unit 2008).

### **Addressing the DPRK Threat**

#### Japan's Past Role in the Six-Party Talks

In December 1998, Japan and Russia jointly released the Moscow Declaration which highlighted the importance of including both countries within negotiations on the DPRK nuclear weapons issues, after they were side-lined in prior four-party talks. Thus, as relatively small actors in the conflict, both Japan and Russia must ensure that they position themselves in such a way that their interests are considered when defining any solution to the conflict.

After the DPRK withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003, Six-Party Talks were held among the key stakeholders in the region (including Japan) to address the nuclear issue between 2003-2009. Throughout the various negotiating rounds, Japan focused on addressing both the North's nuclear program, as well as domestic political considerations related to the DPRK's abduction of Japanese nationals. During the various rounds of negotiations, Japan offered a number of incentives such as the normalization of its relationship with DPRK, reparations for colonial rule, and economic assistance.

However, Japan also took a firm stance against the DPRK when its interests were not met. For example, Japan imposed limited unilateral economic sanctions on the DPRK after it conducted a nuclear test in 2006 during the negotiations. In addition, even after other stakeholders to the talks began delivery of energy assistance per the negotiations, Japan did not provide promised assistance due to the abduction issue. Japan also enhanced existing economic sanctions after the Six-Party Talks fell apart because of disagreements over verification and DPRK missile tests that were conducted in 2009.

Japan had a number of opportunities to re-engage in dialogue with North Korea. However, after additional tests in 2012 and 2013, Japan continued to expand its unilateral sanctions regime. Japan's emphasis on using coercive tools to deal with the North Korean nuclear threat continues in the present day, through its support of the US-led "maximum pressure campaign."

### Maximum Pressure Campaign

Japan is a firm supporter of the US-led "maximum pressure campaign" aimed at forcing the DPRK to negotiate terms towards denuclearization (SAIS Group Meeting, Japanese Embassy, Seoul, January 2018). The campaign uses both economic and diplomatic pressure to force DPRK to "revise its strategic calculus" (Thornton 2017). As part of this campaign, Japan has primarily focused on applying pressure through economic sanctions.

One of the lessons learned by the Japanese during the past Six-Party Talks is that the DPRK used the period during the negotiations to improve its nuclear capabilities. Therefore, there is a perception among some in Japan that the DPRK may use dialogue as a means to buy time in order to enhance its nuclear capabilities. Thus, through the use of economic sanctions, the maximum pressure campaign helps limit the DPRK's ability to source materials that aid its nuclear program.

Notwithstanding, estimates have shown that the DPRK has achieved about 3.8% economic growth in 2016 (Kim 2017), which highlights the inefficiency of the sanctions campaign. Given that sanctions require a long period of time to show results, and that additional time provides the DPRK with a greater opportunity to continue its nuclearization efforts, Japan should consider alternative strategies that can more quickly push the DPRK to the negotiating table. Japan has recognized that there are some gaps in the sanctions regime and has begun to work with its allies to help address them. For example, Japan has begun to work with developing countries to help them effectively implement sanctions programs, and it is currently working with the Trump administration to intercept ships that distribute goods to the DPRK (and thus, undermine economic sanctions efforts).

### **Relationships with Key Actors**

Japan's colonial rule over Korea between 1910 and 1945, and its activities during World War II, have contributed to a number of disputes with the DPRK, ROK, China and Russia that still carry on to the present day. These historical tensions have contributed to a sense of mistrust and skepticism with neighbors that are Japanese "allies" in the context of the DPRK nuclear issue. If not addressed, there is a risk that these underlying tensions may serve as an excuse for Japanese isolation throughout the crisis.

Japan's current relationships with key actors to the conflict (DPRK, US, ROK, China and Russia) will influence the extent to which its interests are achieved vis-à-vis North Korea. Notwithstanding the gravity of the threat that Japan faces when the DPRK conducts ballistic missile and nuclear testing, there has been one major beneficial outcome from the DPRK's latest tests in 2017: the DPRK's demonstration of its improved missile capabilities has

heightened the threat perception and level of insecurity held by all the key actors to the conflict. Japan must ensure that it leverages this greater threat sensitivity to its benefit, while minimizing areas of tensions with actors that are critical to ensuring that it achieves its goals on the peninsula.

#### United States

Similar to Japan, the US is committed to halt DPRKs development of nuclear capabilities and pursue denuclearization. However, their motives and interests are different. Japan is primarily concerned about the existential threat that the DPRK nuclear program poses in the context of its unique (and somewhat limited) independent security posture within the region. On the other hand, the US cannot only consider the support that it must provide to its allies, but also its overall goals of nuclear nonproliferation and threats to its own security.

Still, Japan and the US enjoy very close military cooperation and their policies towards the DPRK are generally aligned. In addition, Japan has a significant trading relationship with the US and provides bases upon which the US relies to project its power within the Asian-Pacific region. As a result, the two parties should continue to maintain close alignment on the DPRK issue (Allen and Sugg 2016).

#### Republic of Korea

Japan and the ROK both rely on the US for their security, and any co-operation is primarily based on the geopolitical security risks they both face from the DPRK. Nonetheless, while the ROK has shown some support for sanctions against the regime, it is very wary about military conflict on the peninsula. Thus, the ROK has been more willing than Japan to use incentives to bring the DPRK to the negotiating table. For example, ROK has generally shown a willingness to halt US-ROK joint military exercises in exchange for dialogue, which Japan considers as futile if not linked to concrete actions towards denuclearization. In addition, the inter-Korean dialogue during and after the 2018 Winter Olympics served as a reminder of the different strategies between the two countries. Japan primarily welcomed the inter-Korean dialogue during the Olympics only because it helped to increase the likelihood of a peaceful Olympics.

The legacy of Japanese colonialism in Korea still has an influence on the present-day relations with the ROK. In particular, there is still a widely held belief that Japan has not sufficiently shown remorse over its use of Korean women as sex slaves (“comfort women”) for its military during World War II. There is a continued risk that Japan’s colonialist past on the peninsula, particularly related to the comfort woman issue, would be an impediment to building trusted military alliances, improving the alignment of interests between the ROK and Japan, and ensuring political cooperation on security issues (e.g., to support emergency evacuation of the 60,000 Japanese that are in South Korea on any given day (International Crisis Group N° 293 2018).

### China

While the Chinese have applied pressure on Pyongyang through economic sanctions, they have been less willing to completely cut off assistance. China is most concerned about the impact of instability in the DPRK. Thus, China is not willing to pursue DPRK denuclearization at any cost, since a nuclear DPRK is considered manageable, while a war is not. As such, the Chinese are pursuing a “double freeze” approach, which involves a DPRK freeze of its nuclear activities in exchange for a freeze of US-ROK joint military exercises. Not surprisingly, the Japanese believe that this approach is insufficient and that maximum pressure should be applied to the Kim regime.

Given China’s relationship with the DPRK, Japan needs to ensure that the Chinese understand its core interests. Japan must take care that China’s concerns about the capabilities of the SDF, the US military presence in Japan and potential aggression against the Chinese, especially its occupation of the Senkaku Islands<sup>3</sup> (Sato and Limaye 2006) do not impede Japan’s security goals with respect to the DPRK. Already, some Chinese share the belief that Japan has a social and cultural inclination towards militarism (despite its contemporary pacifist history), so they believe that Japan should take steps to ensure that these concerns are addressed. Hence, Japan must ensure that its current pursuit of improved defense capabilities does not risk current relations with China, especially given that territorial disputes over the Senkaku Islands have already strained bilateral relations.

### Russia

Like China, Russia also shares a border with the DPRK. Therefore, Russia aims to avoid confrontation and instability in the DPRK, which may threaten Russia’s own economic objectives in the Russian Far East. As such, Russia has generally aligned with China in its DPRK policy, which is demonstrated by its support of the “double freeze” approach. In addition, Russia was granted certain exemptions from participating in the UN Security Council sanctions regime (International Crisis Group 2018), which undermines Japan’s economic efforts to push the DPRK into negotiations.

Notwithstanding, Japan and Russia share close military ties through a 1996 bilateral security document; they notify each other of “major military exercises, allow their naval vessels to visit each other’s ports, launch joint communication drills, and open dialogue between their military officers to enhance high-level bi-lateral security talks” (Sato and Limaye 2006). Still, a territorial dispute over the Northern Territories (also known as the Kuril Islands) has been a persistent source of tension between Russia and Japan since World War II. Russia and Japan have never formally ended hostilities after the war because the territories have been used as a precondition for a peace treaty and normalized relations between the two countries (Economist Intelligence Unit 2008). While the two countries have yet to sign a peace treaty, they have signed a number of official agreements that have transformed their relationship into a constructive one. In 2018, both countries have shown an interest in engaging in negotiations

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<sup>3</sup> In China, the Senkaku Islands are known as the Daiyutai.

to explore joint economic cooperation on the disputed islands. This may be an opportunity for Japan to improve its relationship with Russia, given the increased tensions in the region, and possible suspicions that the Russians may hold about the US-Japanese alliance.

#### Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Throughout their history, the relationship between DPRK and Japan can be characterized as tense and provocative with pockets of appeals to diplomacy. Japan has never established diplomatic relations with the DPRK after the end of World War II. Reparations for the harsh Japanese colonial rule over the Korean peninsula and the return of Japanese nationals kidnapped by the DPRK in the 1970s and 1980s have consistently been used by both states as points of contestation. Today, Japan is primarily concerned that a nuclearized, antagonistic North Korea can threaten its very existence, while the DPRK contends that it requires nuclear weapons to defend itself (and the regime) against external aggression. As such, the positions of Japan and the DPRK regarding nuclearization appear to be in direct opposition to one another.

#### **Conclusion**

Japan's proximity to the DPRK, its imperialist history toward many of the stakeholders to the conflict, and its reliance on US extended deterrence has made it difficult for Japan to flexibly navigate the current crisis. The physical threats from North Korea demand a strong response. Yet, Japan's loose relationships with its neighbors signal that Japan may be isolated and vulnerable if war were to break out. While Japan may be limited in the coercive options that are available to it without seriously provoking war (i.e., economic sanctions), it should not ignore the goodwill that it would need if it were to successfully bring the DPRK to the negotiating table. Therefore, Japan should work to enhance its relationships with its Northeast Asian neighbors (both government and their public) whose support Japan would need during any future Six-Party Talks.

#### **Recommendations**

##### To the Japan Government

- **Increase coordination with other developing countries** to limit the provision of fuel and other tangible assets that support nuclearization on the peninsula. Broad economic sanctions risk pushing global financial activity underground, and may actually undermine the DPRK denuclearization effort.
- **Improve existing relationships with the ROK** by making public acknowledgement of the "comfort women" issue in order to reduce the likelihood that it can be used to isolate Japan if a serious crisis were to break out.
- **Enhance public sentiment toward Japan within ROK and Chinese populations** through cultural initiatives, exchanges, job opportunities for ROK youth.

To the United States Government

- **Continue to provide public support and commitment to protecting allies** in Northeast Asia in order to reduce the risk of miscalculation by the DPRK about the credibility of US extended deterrence.

To the United States and the Republic of Korea

- **Continue to closely engage Japan about developments that can affect the North Korean crisis**, including the provision of any incentives to DPRK, such as a demonstrated interest in entering into negotiations. If Japan perceives that it may be isolated throughout the crisis, there is an increased risk that Japan may take action to further enhance the SDF, which could have broader security implications within the region.



## **Creating a Cooperative Security Mechanism in Northeast Asia**

Battulga Odgerel

The year 2019 will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Six-Party Talks, the sole inclusive multilateral mechanism that ever existed in Northeast Asia. The Six-Party Talks ended when the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) resumed its satellite launch and pulled out of the talks. Since the demise of the Six-Party Talks, there has been little progress toward creating another such mechanism. Despite the potential to enjoy cooperation and prosperity, Northeast Asian countries are suffering from long-lasting historical issues, nuclear weapons programs, territorial disputes, among others. In this chapter, I discuss ways to reach an effective cooperative mechanism in Northeast Asia.

### **The Need for Multilateralism in Northeast Asia**

Despite the presence of major economies—China, Japan, and South Korea—and resource-rich countries—Russia, Mongolia, and the DPRK – Northeast Asia (US Department of State) is not tapping into the potential for becoming one of the more prosperous regions in the world. This is largely due to vexing security problems including historical tensions, territorial disputes, and most importantly, the DPRK's nuclear program, the combination of which the South Korean government refers to as the “Asian Paradox.” With the Trump administration's isolationist policy and other Northeast Asian countries' seeking partners outside of the region, it is increasingly difficult to resolve security issues in Northeast Asia, and the prospect of multilateralism in the region is diminishing. Furthermore, China's expansionary policy in the South China Sea and Central Asia, and the Japanese pursuit of “normal statehood” will likely add to the already complicated regional security dynamics.

Northeast Asia remains the only major region lacking any official multilateral dialogue mechanism, let alone substantial economic and political integration. Scholars point to this lack of multilateralism as the major hindrance to peace-building and prosperity, what Kent Calder has called an “organizational gap” (Calder and Ye 2004). Some tout multilateralism as the best approach to conflict resolution because it “is inclusive, subject-focused, and sets explicit deadlines for negotiations” (Jönsson and Aggestam 2008).

Although there are numerous advantages, the major reasons for creating cooperative multilateralism in Northeast Asia can be limited to the following:

1. It would be instrumental in preventing wars and military conflicts on the Korean Peninsula as well as other parts of the region. Northeast Asia is among the most militarized places in the world, with nearly two million active troops concentrated on the Korean Peninsula. The region has the presence of three of the five UN Security Council members, which are also nuclear powers. Like other regional mechanisms around the world, a regional multilateral framework will be crucial for the prevention of any kind of conflict in the region.

2. It may strengthen concerted efforts in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons as well as an arms race among the states. The Six-Party Talks, although eventually a failure, demonstrated the potential of multilateral dialogue in dealing with nuclear weapons.
3. It will boost aggregate economic growth through regional economic integration. According to the World Bank, the combined GDP of the Northeast Asian six countries in 2017 was US \$ 19 trillion. If integrated more closely, enhanced regional trade will jump-start regional economic prosperity.
4. It addresses common problems that no one country alone can solve in the areas such as environment, energy, infrastructure, and terrorism. Air and marine pollution, overdependence on Middle Eastern oil and gas supply, and lack of railway interconnectivity are only few of shared challenges among the countries.

### **Characteristics Shaping Northeast Asia**

Regional characteristics based on long-lasting historical issues and the countries' unique circumstances hinder multilateralism in Northeast Asia. The region has been described as asymmetrical, strategically adversarial, distrustful, multipolar or lacking "commonly accepted leadership" (Chang 2009), and economically interdependent.

The region contains the world's second and third economies, China and Japan, while Mongolia and the DPRK are approximately 900 and 700 times smaller than China in nominal GDP, respectively, according to the United Nations. In terms of military capability, half of the ten largest military spenders in the world are present in the region (Wezeman et al. 2017), and the DPRK, an economically weak country in the region, has the largest number of military personnel active and in reserve. The distrust among nations stems from historical incidences dating back to the world wars and the Korean War, as well as the emergence of multipolarity in the region, first during the Cold War and then with the rise of China. As a consequence, Northeast Asia is divided into two major groupings, the US alliance on the one side and China and other authoritarian regimes on the other. Ironically, the Northeast Asian countries, with the exception of Russia, are heavily economically dependent on each other, which can be harnessed for mutual cooperation in other sectors.

### **Collective Defense vs. Cooperative Security**

Countries form collective defense arrangements, whereby they jointly act against a common enemy or danger. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, or the Warsaw Pact, were the two dominant collective defense treaties during the Cold War. In contrast to collective defense, which tends to further divide states into competing factions, cooperative security is intended as "preventive medicine rather than acute care" (Vetschera 2007) or as "building relationships with potential adversaries" (Van Ness 2008). Despite no unified definition, scholars generally agree that cooperative security is "a process whereby countries ... work jointly through agreed mechanisms to reduce tensions and suspicion, resolve or mitigate disputes, build confidence,

enhance economic development prospects, and maintain stability in their regions” (Moodie 2000).

Today the US has two bilateral collective defense arrangements in the region, with Japan and South Korea. Despite the dream of a cooperative security mechanism, additional collective defense mechanisms, combined with competing economic policies, are likely to emerge centering around Northeast Asia. Northeast Asian countries are looking for partners in other regions. The Japanese government is pursuing a multilateral mechanism outside the region, with the US, India, and Australia, forming the so-called “Quad,” which many speculate is designed to contain Chinese dominance in Asia, while the Chinese Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is posed against the Japanese-led Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The US, the only non-Northeast Asian party of the Six-Party Talks, prefers bilateral arrangements with its allies to multilateralism in Northeast Asia as it enjoys playing the hub role in its Northeast Asian allies’ hub-and-spokes system. Unless it gives the US a hegemonic status, like other multilateral organizations did in the past, the US will not be interested in creating or allowing the creation of multilateralism in Northeast Asia (Brazinsky 2008). In order to attract US interests and get its support, therefore, it is necessary for Northeast Asian countries to include the US in regional multilateral architecture (Chang 2009)

### **Starting an Effective Cooperative Multilateral Mechanism in Northeast Asia**

When creating a multilateral mechanism, various factors should be taken into consideration: leadership, setting, and timing. Because Northeast Asian countries are asymmetric in power and regional security dynamics are variable, it is almost impossible to create an all-inclusive multilateral mechanism instantly. Instead, given the current circumstances and some ongoing initiatives, it is advisable to pursue regional multilateralism based on a multi-layered, comprehensive approach. Multi-layered, comprehensive multilateralism should be based upon complementary initiatives in different areas by different actors. A Northeast Asian multilateralism based on “division of labor” can be divided into three main areas: economy, development, and security.

### **Triangular Economic Cooperation Approach**

In the past, scholars proposed establishing a Northeast Asian Free Trade Area (NEAFTA) under AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Area) to compete with US and EU influence in the Asia Pacific region (Nakagawa 2007), given the region’s enormous economic potential. According to the 2016 World Bank data, the combined nominal GDP of the 6 Northeast Asian countries, including Russia’s total GDP, was at US \$18.86 trillion or slightly larger than US \$18.62 trillion of the US (World Bank 2016). The largest economies in the region, China, Japan and South Korea, are each other’s first, second or third bilateral trading partners. Scholars point to all three countries’ shared Confucian social norms, growth-driven development model, and populations stemming from Mongol stock as a basis on which they can build a “triangle” based on economic interdependence (Bean 1990). A proposed China-Japan-Republic of Korea Free

Trade Agreement (FTA), if implemented, will spur economic cooperation in the region, furthering interdependence which may have positive implications for addressing regional security issues.

Lifestyle and GDP per capita in all three countries are converging as China's GDP per capita is gradually catching up to Japan and South Korea. In this regard, the Northeast Asian countries may leverage their membership in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to create Northeast Asian multilateralism by sub-grouping under ASEAN. Other countries can be included after the successful creation of the trilateral FTA. Russia, with abundant natural resources, can provide East Asia with its oil, gas and mineral resources. Russian membership is mutually beneficial, especially as Japan and South Korea are over-dependent on Middle Eastern energy. The same holds true for Mongolia, another resource-rich country, if infrastructure is developed.

Russia, China and Mongolia are working towards infrastructure and economic integration through a trilateral economic corridor based on the three countries' regional visions including the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Otgonsuren 2015). As part of the initiative, 32 projects are planned for the areas of infrastructure, heavy industry, border control, energy, environment, science, humanities, agriculture and health (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia). In the medium to long run, it is possible to combine these two cooperative economic mechanisms, which will create complementary economic integration in Northeast Asia. China, having stakes at both tables, may play a critical role in combining these two mechanisms into a regional economic cooperation mechanism.

### **Comprehensive Cooperation and Development Approach**

There has been a dearth of regionwide development cooperation projects in Northeast Asia. An initiative supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Greater Tumen Initiative, is among such programs, but it only covers the areas along the Tumen River area and has been slow to develop since its inception. The initiative, with the membership of China, Mongolia, South Korea and Russia, promotes cooperation in areas including infrastructure, border security, and environment sustainability (Greater Tumen Initiative). Since the initiative is neither all-inclusive of the regional countries nor active enough to bear fruit in the short term, additional regionwide cooperation programs should be developed.

Commensurate with its status as a middle power and its aspiration to shape global affairs through its "hosting diplomacy" (Snyder et al. 2015), South Korea has been the most active proponent of multilateralism in Northeast Asia. As inter-Korean relations are among the most politicized issues in South Korea, however, it is hard for the South Korean government to pursue a stable, long-term policy toward DPRK in the context of a regional security mechanism. Because South Korea pursued multilateralism as an alternative resource for its DPRK policy when its bilateral relations with the latter failed, none of the multilateral initiatives were instrumental to reaching favorable results. An example is former President Park Geun-hye's Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), an arm of

*Trustpolitik*, the administration's vision for engaging DPRK through trust-building in soft security issues rather than hard security issues. Since DPRK has never been represented in its conferences, however, the initiative was in general seen as yet another failure. Thus, South Korea should pursue multilateral initiatives only as part of its middle power diplomacy, separating them from its peace and security policy toward DPRK.

### **Security Approach**

Hard security issues, in particular nuclear proliferation, are arguably the most difficult to resolve given their intensity and complexity. This is especially true since every party of Six-Party Talks had a stake in the regional security issues. A third party can step in since it tends not to have any direct political connection to the conflict. A third party is often considered necessary to transmit information, aid, and provide political cover (Beardsley and Lo 2014) between belligerents. Mongolia, the only Northeast Asian country not a party to SPT, can play the role of a third party in hard security issues, leveraging its friendly relations with all regional countries because of the absence of any military or territorial dispute with any foreign country. By providing a venue for dialogue, the country can transmit information and offer a neutral, less visible venue where parties feel secure.

Driven by its commitment to regional security and cooperation based on its Foreign Policy Concept (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia 2011), Mongolia proposed an initiative, "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security" (UB Dialogue), in 2008 to promote dialogue among nations in the region. The initiative strives to address the most vexing issues by providing a venue for government officials (track 1) and think tanks and scholars (track 2) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia 2015). Mongolia has maintained the continuation of the UB Dialogue annual conference since 2014, regardless of changes in the government, and plans to hold the fourth annual conference in June 2018. Unlike other initiatives in Northeast Asia, these conferences had the participation of North Koreans, thereby drawing much attention of scholars to the potential role of Mongolia in resolving security issues in the region.

### **Conclusion**

It is neither wise nor realistic to design a detailed road map for creating multilateralism over the long run given the changing circumstances in Northeast Asia. However, it is necessary for all Northeast Asian states to share similar visions of creating an institution. In the short run, there is a higher chance of additional collective defense arrangements surrounding Northeast Asia than a cooperative security mechanism within the region. The US strong preference for bilateralism in the region is likely to further prevent a regionwide, inclusive multilateralism. In the long run, however, depending on power dynamics and generational change in Northeast Asia, there may be solid ground for effective institutionalism in the region. Since a comprehensive, cooperative multilateralism is not seen as a possible option in the short- and mid-run, Northeast Asian countries may use "make-shift" multilateral institutions at various

levels and issue areas: economy, security, and development. In this regard, economic cooperative mechanisms among China-Japan-South Korea and China-Mongolia-Russia need to materialize to tap into the real potential for economic prosperity. These two mechanisms then can combine together, complementing the three developed economies with Russian and Mongolian mineral resources. In development and security spheres, South Korea and Mongolia can play greater roles using their comparative advantages as a middle power and as a neutral third party, respectively. In so doing, the two countries need to be consistent and persistent in their initiatives regardless of changing circumstances and changing policies by the US and the DPRK.

## **Recommendations**

### To South Korea

- **Pursue multilateralism** mainly as part of the middle power diplomacy, balancing between the US and China as well as promoting cooperation in the region, and disconnect the existing multilateral initiatives from any policy toward DPRK.
- Even during rapprochements with DPRK, **continue focusing on creating a multilateral mechanism.**

### To Mongolia

- **Collaborate with more international organizations and think tanks in the organization of UBD**, which would give financial and reputational benefits to the sustainability of the government's efforts for multilateralism in the region.
- **Develop the structure of UBD:** hold bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference and hold some session in closed door.
- Seek ways to **collaborate with other government agencies**, especially those in defense, to create concerted efforts. One possible option is to connect UB Dialogue with "Khaan Quest," a multinational peacekeeping exercise hosted by the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) and co-sponsored by US Pacific Command (PACOM)

## Conclusion

P. Terrence Hopmann

The developing crisis on the Korean Peninsula presents one of the potentially most significant threats to international peace and security since the Caribbean missile crisis of 1962. The preceding sixteen chapters represent an effort by SAIS students of conflict management to analyze the roots of the conflict and to recommend policies intended to prevent this conflict from escalating out of control. North Korea's efforts to obtain operational nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them over long distances presents a serious threat to peace, not only in East Asia but throughout the world. In this conclusion, I shall draw from these chapters to summarize the major findings from our field trip and highlight several of the most important policy recommendations.

A fundamental issue running throughout this crisis involves understanding the motivations of the DPRK regime, and its leader Kim Jong-un, for acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Simon Arias considers three possible explanations from a military perspective. First, North Korea may wish to unify Korea by force: the most frequently cited scenario for this rationale would involve an attack by the DPRK on South Korea, combined with a threat by the DPRK to retaliate with nuclear missiles against the US if it intervened in support of its South Korean ally. As Charlie Bruer observes in his chapter, this scenario has achieved some salience within the administration of US President Donald Trump, where key officials view the North Korean program as designed to force the US to withdraw from its security commitments in Korea. Most South Korean analysts, however, tended to dismiss this scenario as unlikely for two primary reasons. First, it underestimates the ability of the South Korean military forces to defend their country if attacked from the north, even without US assistance. Second, of even greater significance, it ignores the risk that the US might fulfill its commitment of extended deterrence to its South Korea ally, which would likely lead to the total destruction of the DPRK and its regime. In short, most individuals we met believe that Kim Jong-un, though something of a risk taker, is not suicidal, and that an attack on the ROK risks a high probability of devastating retaliation from the US sufficient to deter North Korea's leadership from such a risky action.

The second possible rationale for the DPRK nuclear weapons program analyzed by Arias, and largely accepted by most South Korean analysts whom we met, is that it provides a deterrent against a possible US and/or South Korean attack on the DPRK. Numerous interlocutors suggested that Kim Jong-un is virtually obsessed with the fear of becoming another Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gadhafi, both of whom relinquished their nuclear weapons programs only to be attacked and killed. Especially in the light of recent belligerent threats from the US, the DPRK's nuclear weapons program, especially its development of long-range missiles, is believed by the regime in the North to constitute a credible deterrent against similar actions by the US and/or the ROK.

Thirdly, Arias notes that the North Korean nuclear weapons program might represent a “bargaining chip” potentially to be negotiated away in exchange for commitments by the US and the ROK that it has long sought, namely a peace treaty formally ending the Korean war, diplomatic recognition by *inter alia* the US and the ROK of the DPRK as a sovereign state with the establishment of full diplomatic relations, and a commitment by both not to pursue “regime change” or to intervene in North Korea’s internal affairs. Although many people we met believe that Kim Jong-un will be reluctant to give up nuclear weapons entirely under any conditions, it appears that the government of Moon Jae-un believes that this rationale for the North’s nuclear weapons program is sufficiently possible for the ROK to seek agreement through diplomatic negotiations. The recent offer by Kim Jong-un to meet with US President Donald Trump, on the urging of ROK officials, also lends credibility to this underlying rationale.

In addition to these military drivers of the DPRK nuclear program, other reinforcing factors reflect ideological and political goals of the North Korean regime. Ariane Noar emphasizes the role of North Korea’s fundamental ideology of *juche* as a long-term and consistent element of North Korean policy. *Juche* emphasizes the goals of political independence, economic self-reliance, and national self-defense. As she notes, this ideology lies behind efforts to maintain the DPRK’s isolation from international engagement and its willingness to accept the political and economic consequences of autarchy; indeed, the threat to isolate the DPRK from the international community has little significance as this just reinforces North Korean ideological goals. For this reason, she emphasizes that North Korea has been able to survive the effects of economic sanctions due to its limited dependence on international trade and aid, and it also limits the DPRK’s interest in unification with South Korea on any terms other than its own domination of the peninsula. However, as James Sayre also argues, Kim Jong-un’s policy has also changed, in part due to the necessity of receiving aid for its military and economy from other countries, especially from China, as well as from the effects of a developing small market economy in the North and the rise of “black market” trade with China and other neighbors.

Ellexis Chapman adds to these considerations the dominant desire to the regime of Kim Jong-un to preserve not only his own regime but the continuity of the Kim dynasty in North Korea. This reinforces the government’s efforts to avoid internal collapse due to worsening economic conditions or to increasing openness of North Korean society to outside influences, as well as to avert external challenges to the regime’s control through developing its military deterrent, as noted also in the second rationale for the nuclear weapons program in the chapter by Arias. In this respect, it has manipulated external hostility and threats to the regime, especially by US leaders, to justify internal repression and serious economic difficulties. In addition, as Chapman notes, it is the fear of the international consequences of regime collapse that motivates neighbors such as China and Russia to resist what they perceive as efforts by the US and its Asian allies to threaten the stability of the regime. There would almost certainly be extremely serious consequences to the collapse of the regime in Pyongyang, whether

internally or externally driven, and Chapman emphasizes the importance of consultations among all parties engaged in the East Asian regime to plan to manage such a development if it were to occur.

In our visit to South Korea we found widespread, if not universal support, for negotiations with the North on the nuclear weapons issue, and this policy of engagement has clearly been central to the efforts undertaken by the government of President Moon Jae-un to resolve the crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Since our return from Korea it appears that such negotiations may be on the horizon. This, however, suggests the importance of designing a long-term strategy for managing negotiations, as they will inevitably involve multiple and complex issues that cannot be resolved quickly or easily. Rona Vaselaar proposes an approach to future negotiations that emphasizes “problem-solving” rather than tit-for-tat bargaining. Instead of approaching these issues as one of mutual concessions in a reciprocal fashion, used in most previous negotiations on inter-Korean issues, she emphasizes the desirability of starting with a joint analysis of what each party needs to achieve from the negotiations. This means that the US must acknowledge the DPRK’s need for an end to American hostility towards the regime, an effective treaty to formally end the Korean War, and a normalization of relations at the political level. In turn, North Korea must acknowledge the insecurity created throughout the East Asian region, especially in the ROK and Japan as well as across the Pacific in the US, by its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons program. By starting with an acknowledgement of the mutual concerns and insecurities, the negotiations must focus on building trust between the parties in order to recognize that a resolution of this conflict will contribute to the security of all relevant parties. For the US, above all this requires a continuity of policy that demonstrates clearly that the US commitments made in a negotiation will not change from one administration to the next. The DPRK’s mistrust of the US stems in large part from their perception that the administration of George W. Bush, on the urging of Under Secretary of State John Bolton, abandoned the “Agreed Framework” in 2001, negotiated by the Clinton administration in 1994, that significantly constrained the DPRK nuclear weapons program (Oberdorfer and Carlin, 2014, 350-380). Therefore, Vaselaar concludes that any negotiated agreement will have to be preceded by efforts on both sides to enhance communications and trust in a non-hostile environment that will enable them to identify ways to move forward based on their joint interest in avoiding a mutually destructive war in the future.

Christina Gay also echoes the support that we found in Seoul to find a negotiated solution to the conflict on the Korean Peninsula, while also noting the emphasis of our ROK interlocutors on combining a policy of “maximum pressure, maximum engagement.” This approach emphasizes the necessity of keeping pressure on the regime in the North through the use of “sticks” such as economic sanctions, with the offer of “carrots” or incentives for reaching a negotiated solution to the conflict. Sticks may be necessary to maintain the costs for the DPRK of continuing to develop nuclear weapons, and they also can be removed if North Korea agrees to the most significant demands of the US and its East Asian allies. At the same

time, threats alone are not sufficient to produce the necessary concessions from Pyongyang. Gay especially emphasizes the importance for the US to provide assurances to the Kim regime that it seeks only a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and not regime change in North Korea. Furthermore, she argues that the regime in the North can likely sustain itself in spite of the economic sanctions, with its already destitute citizens paying the highest price from the sanctions regime. Finally, reinforcing a point made by Vaselaar, she stresses the difficulties that democratic societies face in producing a consistent and bipartisan foreign policy, as well as the risk that a change in policy from one administration to another in both the ROK and the US poses to North Korea if it negotiates away its nuclear deterrent. In short, the provision of long-term security guarantees to North Korea that will last from one administration to another, is a necessary “carrot” to persuade the North Korean leadership to agree to denuclearization.

In this regard, Sarah Hutson takes a somewhat more pessimistic view of the likelihood of successfully negotiating denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula in view of the experience of past negotiations. She emphasizes that the collapse of the Agreed Framework, negotiated bilaterally by the US and the DPRK, does not auger well for the success of future bilateral negotiations between these two parties due to the mistrust of one another that creates a serious obstacle to negotiations. This mistrust also largely doomed the subsequent Six-Party Talks that brought South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia into a multilateral format intended to provide both political support for North Korea as well as pressure on it from its powerful neighbors. In spite of agreements in principle, however, arguments about details led to their collapse, along with the refusal of the Bush administration to remove the DPRK from its list of “state sponsors of terrorism,” exacerbating the atmosphere of mistrust among the parties. Among the details that Hutson emphasizes that have consistently complicated agreement on denuclearization are issues of verification and agreed procedures for resolving issues that might arise in implementing an agreement. Therefore, she concludes by emphasizing the importance of trust-building efforts among the parties as a necessary precondition to any successful negotiations about denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. She also emphasizes the necessity of consistent engagement by the government in Seoul as well as the support for confidence-building measures that can be provided by other parties in the region, especially China and Russia.

Scott Sloat further links the efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula to the global non-proliferation regime, which consists not only of the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its Model Additional Protocol, but also the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and ongoing negotiations on a Fissile Material Control Treaty or a possible treaty on Negative Security Assurances. The NPT creates two categories of states within its regime: the five “nuclear weapons states” at the time of its signature—the US, Russia, China, UK, and France—and all other “non-nuclear weapons states.” By excluding any additional nuclear weapons states from participation in the regime, it has excluded the *de facto* nuclear weapons states of India, Pakistan, Israel, and most recently the DPRK. North Korea has intermittently joined the NPT as a “non-nuclear weapons state” and accepted

safeguard inspections of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, following the collapse of the Agreed Framework, the DPRK withdrew in 2003 from the NPT and expelled IAEA inspectors. Further threats to the NPT could arise, as Sloat notes, from possible decisions by South Korea or Japan to withdraw from the NPT and seek nuclear weapons in response to the new threat from North Korea; significant political elements in both countries, currently in opposition, have advocated developing nuclear deterrents, especially if US “extended deterrence” is no longer perceived as credible in response to the nuclear weapons threat from the DPRK. Further challenges to the non-proliferation regime could occur if the DPRK decides to transfer missile or nuclear weapons technologies to other states or, even worse, to non-state actors. Sloat, therefore, concludes that successful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will require the DPRK to return to full participation in the NPT regime and its Model Additional Protocol as a non-nuclear weapons state with acceptance of the full IAEA safeguards mechanisms, along with full assurances by South Korea and Japan of their long-term commitment to that regime. Until such time as an agreement along these lines is reached, he recommends maintaining the current ambiguous status of the DPRK within the NPT regime so as to allow it to re-enter the regime as a non-nuclear weapons state should that opportunity arise in the future.

Finally, Trang Thi Quynh Dang observes that the ultimate goal around which leaders in both North and South Korea agree in principle is not just denuclearization but the eventual reunification of the Korean Peninsula, reflecting their shared identity as “Koreans.” Of course, unification is unlikely to occur immediately or rapidly due to the significant differences in political and economic systems and the long history of division between the two Koreas. Drawing on her experience as a citizen of a reunited Vietnam, however, she notes the attraction of shared identity among peoples living in nations divided during the Cold War. At the same time, she acknowledges that surveys of South Korean attitudes undertaken by the Korean Institute for National Unification document the declining support for reunification among South Korean youth, in contrast to the strong support for this goal among older citizens of the ROK. The Ministry of Unification in the ROK has stressed the importance of persuading the South Korean population that, similar to the case of German reunification after the end of the Cold War, initial economic costs would be borne by South Korea, but the net result after a relatively short period of time would likely be increased prosperity for all Koreans. In addition, negotiations of denuclearization and tension-reduction may be viewed as initial steps towards unification, which is best achieved through diplomacy rather than force, in contrast to the unification of Vietnam, where it left a legacy of hostility that had to be slowly overcome by significant efforts at mutual reconciliation. Deng suggests that perhaps the best model for Korean unification, though different in some respects, might be the reunification of China and Hong Kong in an arrangement known as “one nation, two systems.” Such a deeply decentralized system at the outset might enable the two Koreas to redevelop their shared identities without requiring immediate and radical changes in either political, economic, or social position, even though these would likely evolve towards greater integration over time.

In the absence of a comprehensive agreement regarding nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles on the Korean Peninsula, many issues remain concerning avoidance of war and the containment of the threat to South Korea and the East Asian region from North Korea. Central to this are assurances that the US can provide to the ROK about its commitments to the defense of its ally in the face of the rapidly changing strategic balance presented by a direct threat to the US from DPRK nuclear-armed missiles that seems likely to arise in the near future if North Korean weapons technology continues to develop at its current pace. Carrie Kagawa argues in her chapter that transfer of “wartime operational control” (OPCON) from the US to the ROK would enhance South Korea’s confidence in its ability to assure its own defense in the event of a threat of war with its northern neighbor. At the same time, this policy change raises the issue of whether this might decouple the US from its defense commitments to the ROK and thereby leave South Korea increasingly vulnerable to threats from its nuclear-armed neighbor. Some political leaders on both sides of the Pacific, therefore, have been reluctant to proceed with this long overdue change in the military relationship between these two allies. After a series of half-way efforts to transfer command and control to the ROK, the US now appears ready to make the transition in concurrence with the administration of President Moon. In order not to decouple the US from Korean defense, however, the US must demonstrate the continued effectiveness of its “extended deterrence” commitment in order to deter any attack from North Korea by threatening to retaliate against the DPRK if it were to engage in aggression against the South. This, however, presents several other challenges to the alliance. First, the DPRK threat to retaliate by using nuclear armed long-range missiles against US targets—whether Guam, Hawaii, or the US mainland—calls into question the credibility of the US commitment to fulfill its alliance commitments. However, as Kagawa suggests, this might increase the credibility of a South Korean response to any aggression with its own very significant defense forces. Several measures to try to enhance deterrence in the aftermath of transfer, however, also introduce new problems. One proposal from the South Korean opposition would be for the ROK to obtain its own tactical nuclear weapons; however, this would both increase tensions with the DPRK and, as noted by Sloat, would further undermine the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. In part to enhance deterrence, the US has recently decided to deploy the US Theatre High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system to South Korea. However, as Cheng Zhang argues in her chapter, from a Chinese perspective, for technical reasons associated with its radar system, it also presents a threat to the Chinese nuclear deterrence capability, thereby threatening the cooperative relationship that has been developed in many sectors between China and the ROK in recent years. Therefore, she argues that South Korea and China need to strengthen their own communications and cooperation on security in the region in order to avert increased tensions between those two states. Furthermore, she argues that THAAD provides little if any deterrent value against a possible North Korean conventional attack on Seoul, whose vast population sits within range of a vast DPRK conventional offensive capability. Therefore, she argues that THAAD adds little to the US

commitment to extend its nuclear umbrella over South Korea, while possibly provoking tensions with its Chinese neighbor.

If future diplomacy fails to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, another issue is whether and how South Korea, the US, and other countries in the region can learn to live with a nuclear-armed DPRK. This is the question posed by Charlie Bruer in his chapter, which seeks to draw lessons from one of the other cases of a nuclear weapons state operating outside the non-proliferation regime, namely Pakistan. He refers to the “stability-instability paradox,” which asserts that the stability provided by nuclear threats of assured destruction may actually allow for instability at lower levels of violence, empowering the parties to engage in provocations and smaller conflicts falling below the threshold of nuclear war and with minimal risks of escalating to that level; indeed, the very fear of escalation may permit low level violence with little fear of escalation due to the destructive consequences it would entail. A classic case frequently used to elucidate this phenomenon is the Kargil crisis of 1999 between India and Pakistan, following shortly after the latter’s acquisition of nuclear weapons. While acknowledging many differences between that situation and the current tensions on the Korean Peninsula, Bruer argues that the takeaway lesson from this case is that North Korea’s acquisition of nuclear weapons is unlikely to make it more belligerent or aggressive in its relations with South Korea. He argues that the long-term status of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the array of forces on both sides makes any aggressive action across that line extremely risky and therefore unlikely, even with a nuclear-armed North Korea. In short, he largely supports the argument made by Arias in his chapter that the primary purpose of the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program is deterrence rather than aggression. While the DPRK may engage in low-level provocations such as its shelling of Yeonpyeong island or its attacks upon the South Korean vessel, the Cheonan, in 2010, these are unlikely to escalate due to the existential risks associated with escalation in a region in which nuclear weapons are present. Bruer, therefore, argues for the US to maintain a robust defense commitment to South Korea without engaging in provocative actions such as a “bloody nose” strike against some North Korean nuclear facilities. In short, in the absence of a negotiated denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the US and the world may have to learn to live with a nuclear North Korea, just as they learned to live with a nuclear India and Pakistan, avoiding provocations while maintaining effective deterrence against the use of weapons of mass destruction for aggressive purposes.

The Korean conflict takes place within a larger regional context, and the final set of papers in this volume treat the role of regional actors. China has long been the most important regional actor, especially due to its close ties with the DPRK, especially regarding trade. However, as Yinchen Yan points out in her chapter, China has mixed feelings about the current crisis. On the one hand, China is concerned that North Korea’s nuclear weapons program creates instability and the possibility of conflict in East Asia, which would be detrimental to Chinese interests. Reflecting this view, China has recently come into fuller compliance with international sanctions against the regime in Pyongyang, and many Chinese academics openly support the US position regarding North Korea. At the same time, China is wary of pushing

the DPRK too far out of a concern that this might lead to a collapse of the Kim regime and domestic chaos within North Korea. At one level, this creates concern about the possible flow of millions of refugees from a collapsing DPRK into China that will present huge challenges to the Chinese ability to cope. Even more worrisome to Beijing is that a government collapse might allow the US military to engage in North Korea and perhaps approach the Chinese border for the first time since 1950, when it led to China's entry into the Korean War. Therefore, if the US pushes too far and threatens the North Korean buffer that lies between US and Chinese forces, China might likely come to the defense of the DPRK. Therefore, Yan recommends close consultation between the US and China before any incident arises that might bring them inadvertently into conflict with one another. It is important to engage in joint planning about how to manage any collapse of the North Korean regime, especially how to work together to secure any nuclear weapons or other WMD that might fall into the hands of non-state actors. Above all, Yan stresses the importance of US and Chinese cooperation within the UN Security Council to manage the crisis on the Korean Peninsula before it gets out of hand.

Russia has also recently come to play an increasingly important role in the Korea conflict as it seeks to exert its recreated great power status to manage the conflict on the Peninsula. Chris Barnes writes in his chapter that Moscow pursues a dual strategy, first seeking to reign in North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs while also advocating adoption of a "dual freeze" on both the DPRK nuclear and missile testing and simultaneously halting US-ROK joint military exercises to allow negotiations to proceed without new military threats that could disrupt the effort to find a solution to the crisis. Moscow has become an enthusiastic supporter to the recent efforts to open negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, especially between Presidents Trump and Kim. At the same time, Barnes observes that Russia seeks to extend its economic ties with the DPRK, not just for their own sake but as an entry route into larger East Asian-Pacific markets, and this limits Russian enthusiasm for economic sanctions against the regime in Pyongyang. He thus argues that the US needs to accept Russia's desire to play a greater role in the management of the Korean crisis, while assuring the Russian government that the US seeks denuclearization on all parts of the Korean Peninsula and is not interested in pursuing regime change in the DPRK.

Japan appears to be greatly concerned about advances in the North Korean nuclear weapons and delivery programs, which aligns its position very closely with the US, as Zindzi Thompson reports in her chapter. Indeed, Japanese leaders and publics appear to have more immediate fears about the threat from North Korean even than their US allies. This in part stems from the long and painful history of Japanese occupation of Korea, as well as continuing concerns in both North and South Korea about Japan's refusal to issue a formal apology for their exploitation of so-called "comfort women" during World War II. Furthermore, although the DPRK has not yet tested a missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead to the continental US, its missile tests leave no doubt about its ability to strike Japan. Finally, Japan's security is further compromised by the internationally-imposed constitutional restrictions placed on its "self-defense" forces since the end of World War II. Therefore, Japan participated in the Six-

Party Talks and would like to have a place at the table in any future talks about East Asian security issues. In the interim, Japan favors a “maximum pressure” approach without active efforts at engagement until the DPRK ceases its weapons tests and other provocative actions; they are opposed to negotiations that will allow the DPRK to continue to develop its strategic weapons while talks are under way. At the same time, Japan depends heavily on the US commitment to “extended deterrence,” as Thompson observes, in the absence of which Japan might seek to break out of its constitutional constraints on its military and perhaps develop its own nuclear deterrent, which it could accomplish in short order. On the other hand, Japan is also constrained by the strong, if diminishing, anti-nuclear feeling that results from its having been the only country ever to be a victim to a nuclear attack. To further regional cooperation, Thompson recommends that Japan actively seek to end the dispute with the ROK over the “comfort women” issue and seek to develop greater cooperation with other regional actors.

Finally, Battulga Odgerel argues that East Asia needs to develop its own regional security mechanism, similar in purpose if not in structure to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, or the African Union. This could provide a forum for resolving multiple regional security issues, not only the crisis over the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program by creating a general forum for discussion of a broad range of regional security challenges. Furthermore, he argues that this is necessary to break down the developing system of opposing collective defense alignments throughout the region, often designed to balance Chinese regional influence. As with several other regional security institutions, economic and development cooperation could reinforce positive measures for promoting regional security. From a Mongolian perspective, Odgerel emphasizes the potential for Mongolia to play a significant role as the only country in East Asia that has good relations with all the parties engaged in the Korean conflict. By being out of the media spotlight, he notes that Mongolia has already served as a venue for unofficial meetings among the parties to the Korean conflict, and he recommends that it build on its role as a neutral party within the region to facilitate efforts at conflict resolution. In the long-run, he argues, this could provide a foundation for the development of a more effective regional security mechanism for conflict management in East Asia.

In conclusion, the nuclear weapons developments on the Korean Peninsula constitute perhaps the greatest threat to international peace and security in 2018 and beyond. Despite some nuanced differences, most of the authors of this report suggest that this conflict must be managed with care and without the recent spate of hostile rhetoric and mutual threats of total destruction. Deterrence by the US of threats to the security of its Asian allies remain more important than ever. Significant elements of pressure on North Korea may also be desirable to encourage the regime in Pyongyang to conclude that a peaceful resolution of the conflict serves their interests better than the pain of international sanctions and condemnation. At the same time, there is widespread agreement in these chapters that engagement with North Korea is necessary and desirable in the search for a lasting solution to their security objectives that does not at the same time threaten their neighbors in the region or other global states, including the

US. At this time, it is uncertain whether the goal of complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be achieved in the foreseeable future or even just what that would entail. But it is clear that a long series of serious and sustained negotiations will be necessary to solve the problems created by the threat of a nuclear arms race in East Asia. To be successful these negotiations must take place in an atmosphere free from hostile rhetoric that allows for better communications and a mutual understanding of the needs of all parties to the conflict for reliable and durable security guarantees. The US and its Asian allies who seek an end to the DPRK's nuclear weapons program need to develop a clear strategy that articulates what assurances they need to provide to North Korea to compensate for any agreement by them to relinquish their nuclear deterrent; many of these will no doubt be painful for policy-makers in the US, ROK, and Japan in particular, but in all negotiations "one must give something to get something." It is clear what the US and its allies want to get from the DPRK, but the US and its allies have been far from clear about what they are willing to give to the DPRK in return. Coming to a collective decision about a long-term strategy for constructive dialogue and negotiations with the DPRK is an absolute necessity before opening formal negotiations. The absence of clarity about negotiating objectives can only reproduce the failures that have characterized past negotiations. At this moment in the history of this relationship, however, there is no room for failure. The emerging crisis in East Asia is too deep and too dangerous to be allowed to fester or to escalate, and every effort must be made to find solutions to this crisis before it is too late.

## List of Briefings and Interviews

### Washington, DC briefings Fall 2017

- **Jenny Town**, Associate Director of the US-Korea Institute at SAIS and also Managing Editor and Producer of “38 North,” 2 November 2017
- **Dr James Person**, SAIS Asian Studies Program, 16 November 2017
- **Ambassador Robert Gallucci**, Chairman of the US-Korea-Institute at SAIS, former US negotiator of the 1994 “Agreed Framework,” 13 December 2017

### Seoul, Korea January 20-26, 2018

#### Saturday, January 20

- Tour of the Korean Demilitarized Zone

#### Monday, January 22

- **Dr. Hyun-Wook Kim**, Associate Professor, Korea National Diplomatic Academy
- **Dr Bong-Geun Jun**, Professor, Korea National Diplomatic Academy
- **Ildo Hwang**, Assistant Professor, Korea National Diplomatic Academy
- **Dr. Sang Hyun Lee**, Vice President for Research Planning, Sejong Institute
- **Dr. Jung-Yeop Woo**, Director of the Center for Security Policy, Asan Institute for Policy Studies
- **Dr. Tai Hwan Lee**, Senior Fellow, Sejong Institute
- **Kyung Hwan Cho**, Sejong Institute
- **Dr. Un Chul Yang**, Vice President, Sejong Institute
- **David Straub**, Sejong-LS Fellow, Sejong Institute

#### Tuesday, January 23

- **Yasuhiro Tsukamoto**, Councilor, Embassy of Japan
- **Mr. Sungju Lee**, DPRK defector, Citizens’ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights
- **Mr. Jong Dae Kim**, Member of the National Assembly (Justice Party)

**Wednesday, January 24**

- **Hyoung-chan Choe**, Director General, International Policy Bureau, ROK Ministry of National Defense
- **Kang Cheol-Hwan**, Executive Director, North Korea Strategy Center
- Group of Defectors from North Korea

**Thursday, January 25**

- **Dr. Kuyoun Chung**, Korean Institute of National Unification
- **Dr. Ki-Young Sung**, Korean Institute of National Unification
- **Young-Ja Park**, Korean Institute of National Unification
- **Hyun-woo Cho**, Korean Institute of National Unification
- **Sangmin (Simon) Lee**, Chief of the Political-External Unity
- **Jerome Ryan**, Counselor, Political-Military Affairs, US Embassy

**Friday, January 26**

- **Dr. Choong-suk Oh**, Director, International Cooperation at the Ministry of Unification
- **Seongwon Lee**, Deputy Director, International Cooperation at the Ministry of Unification
- **Chung Dong-Young**, Member of the National Assembly and former Minister of Unification, National Assembly
- **Lim Sung-nam**, First Vice Foreign Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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