



DATE: September 8, 2017

SUBJECT: How to Handle North Korea

MAIN POINTS:

- Professor Galluci proposed three options: negotiation, containment, and military action, regarding which he highlighted the difference between preemption and preventive war.
- Professor Etzioni presented a China centering around China and introduced a concept called *differential saliency*. The idea is that the US should give China something that is important to China, but not the US, in exchange for something that is important to the US but not China.
- Professor Brazinsky presented the difficult and complex challenges facing the China option. Mainly, he discussed the historical and symbolic nature North Korea is to Chinese national identity, which makes complete jeopardizing of the nation an undesirable option.

The event can be viewed at: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?433122-1/us-policy-north-korea>, accessed 09/08/2017.

EVENT OVERVIEW

Date: August 28, 2017

Time: 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Location: The Institute of Korean Studies at George Washington University

Attendees:

- **Robert L. Gallucci**, Dean of Georgetown School of Foreign Policy, Ambassador at

Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK)
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW · Suite 435 · Washington, DC 20036
(202) 499-7970 · Fax (202) 758-2348 · www.hrnk.org

Large (Former), Korean Affairs at Department of State

- **Amitai Etzioni**, Professor of International Affairs at George Washington University
- **Gregg A. Brazinsky**, Associate Professor of History and International Affairs at George Washington University
- **Jisoo Kim**, Moderator, Associate Professor of History, International Affairs, and East Asian Languages and Literatures.

SUMMARY

Robert L. Gallucci

There are three options in handling North Korea. The first option is containment: containing and managing the threat with strategic patience. The US will first tend to its alliances with ROK and Japan, meaning that we will do military exercises and consult. We will extend our deterrence principle to these countries. Second, there will be sanctions. Our third step will be with China. Asking for Chinese help to mitigate the threat is important. All of these options drive to managing the threat and the second of three options: negotiations. The Bush Administration started with negotiations, then containment, which was not very containing in North Korea's case. It is not clear whether the next administration (Obama) really pursued negotiations. We are now in a situation where it is very difficult to tell what we are doing. It seems like we are involved in containment and that we are considering option two, containment. Negotiations could mean a great many things and at some point aimed at normalization, but it is different from containment.

The third option is military action of one kind or another. There is a distinction between preemption and preventive strike. I hope everyone favors preemptive strike, which is a strike a nation launches towards another just before the other attacks. This is acceptable in international law but it must be done just before the other side strikes. However, if you prevent someone from getting the ability to strike, that is not preemption. Preemption yes, but preventive war, I am prejudiced against. Preventive war masked as preemption, such as in the case of the Iraq War, is not very good. When we think about prevention, it is useful to think of the capability we are trying to prevent North Korea from getting. Clearly, it is not nuclear weapons. They have nuclear weapons. It is not arming nuclear missiles with nuclear weapons, because it is quite plausible that they can, in terms of size, fit the nuclear weapons they have designed into a nuclear missile. Whether that warhead will withstand the reentry forces in a continental missile is another matter. But certainly, IRBMs are the proposition. We have allowed that to happen. Will we tolerate a

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vulnerability to let our allies suffer under a nuclear North Korea? Our vulnerability adds a degree of question about whether we are credible if North Korea did attack our allies.

We have now three options open. We had 40 years of containment, 10 years of negotiation, and now 15 years of containment. This leaves us silent on the question of transfer. I think that deterrence has worked against the Soviet Union, China, and it will work against North Korea. It will not work against terrorists, and I worry about nuclear terrorism. I thus worry about transfer, for example in 2007-2008 from North Korea to Syria, as North Korea helped Syria build a plutonic weapon. What is the confrontation between the US and North Korea all about: territory, religion, ideology? We are actually allies with a country that is contingent to North Korea, so this is not a geostrategic kind of situation. North Korea's only ally China is not happy with it. What is the source of hostility between the US and North Korea? Do we/they get a lot out of that? The key is human rights. If the North Korean human rights situation is not what it is, normalization would be easily imaginable.

Amitai Etzioni

I will speak of one option that is more promising than others. The US should offer China incentives large enough to convince it to use its abilities to force North Korea to give up nuclear weapons, while not changing regime (just behavior). The good news is the incentive we need to give to China is not horribly hard. I use a new phrase: differential saliency. First of all, it would be a clear and present danger if North Korea is not taken care of. Second, China has the means to force North Korea. If we prevent North Korea from gaining resources and selling things, North Korea will not be able to function. But, for China to take this stance, it will be taking a huge risk. If the regime collapses, millions of North Koreans will surge into China. Equally concerning if not more, a unified Korea will allow the US to move its troops to borders with China. Giving up the North Korea buffer is at considerable cost.

The essential approach is not to look for shared, but different interests. China's interests may not be very important to the US. Give them things that are important to them but not to us and have them give us things that are important for us but are not important to them. It is important for us to stop North Korea's nuclear program. For China, such is not at the top of their interests. What they are concerned about is the anti-nuclear missiles put in South Korea. We claim that these missiles are aimed to stop North Korean missiles but do not target. If we have the capacity to stop retaliation from China, it will feel very exposed and will urge them to build nuclear weapons. The essence of nuclear weapons is to hit back. China is very keen for us to not have those installed in South Korea. So, for example, the beginning of a deal could be: if we do not

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have to worry about nuclear weapons in China, there will be no need to keep THAAD in South Korea. A second approach is to take our troops home once North Korea is solved. What makes China angry are daily intelligence flights to China. What we want from China is a big ask, so we need to give a big give. We may argue for a 10-year package and think outside of the box. Where salience is different is where a deal would be made.

A military attack would be horrific to South Korea. Containment is wonderful but when we are dealing with someone who we do not know it could be challenging. India and Pakistan, both with nuclear weapons, do not threaten the US like North Korea does. The other notion is negotiation. When we sit down and negotiate with North Korea, it will automatically think that we want a regime change (not behavior). When negotiating with Syria, for example, the US claimed a precondition that the head of state has to go for negotiation to happen. Such method is therefore not very effective. Our past record shows that we do not only want to defend against weapons but also try to make states more liberal. At the end of the day, with Syria, we do not have a democratic regime either. Let us focus on behavioral change right now, instead of trying to change the regime. I see no reason why China would not consider this option and there is no downside. If you offer, and China refuses, we do not lose anything. When Trump talks to China, he thinks that International Relations is a country club. When the Chinese did not comply, he was not happy but his strategy did not involve giving China something that it would like to have, so it did not work.

Gregg A. Brazinsky*Introduction*

The East Asian world stage has had a long history of hostility towards the United States. The People's Republic of China (PRC) had carried out successful nuclear tests and developed missiles capable of hitting the United States. President Richard Nixon visited the PRC in 1972, changing the course of America's relationship with it and transforming the international situation in ways that greatly favored the United States at the time. The situations are not completely analogous, but I believe there to be parallels amongst options we have. In 1972, there really was no way to make the PRC give up its nuclear weapons or ideology, although the US had done everything in its power to prevent it from getting nuclear weapons. The Nixon administration realized that it had two choices. The first was to have a powerful and nuclear-armed China that was completely isolated from the rest of the world. The second option was to have a nuclear-armed China that was integrated into the international community and worked together with the US or could work together with the US on areas where there were common interests. Nixon

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chose the latter. Although the choice did not work out perfectly and there are areas of conflict with China today, it was nonetheless vastly superior to its alternative. The US needs to make a similarly bold and direct diplomatic gesture in dealing with NK. He said that it would give NK a stake in its relationship with the US and it would make it less likely to use its arsenal against America and its allies although NK is and will remain a repressive authoritarian country for the foreseeable future.

Current Diplomacy Measures towards NK

International Relations is a realm in which there are no perfect and often no good options. He emphasized that the best we can do is to reduce the risk of conflict and improve the chances that East Asia can continue to develop peacefully. He said that diplomacy with NK gives us the greatest chance of achieving this. He described three other options pursued so far:

1) Use of Force: He emphasized that it should always be in the background. If they ever used their arsenal on the United States, it will be met with overwhelming force and we should work to continue developing counter capabilities. Seoul has over 12 million people and its greater metropolitan area is within 30 miles of the area, making it in easy striking range of North Korea's old artillery. Even without its nuclear arsenal, North Korea is likely to inflict millions of casualties and do billions of dollars in property damage. Given that South Korea has the 11th largest economy in the world, he emphasized that such a strike would have horrific ramifications for the world economy in addition to creating a humanitarian disaster. He said that the Kim Jung-un regime would have been taken out a long time ago if Seoul was not such an easy target. As long as they are hostages to North Korea's artillery, the risk of a military option is simply too great.

2) Sanctions: Sanctions also have their limitations. Many advocates of sanctions always say that the problem is that they have not been tightened enough, so they will have an impact if we tighten them a little bit more or if we impose stricter secondary sanctions. However, as much as we dislike North Korea's political leadership, North Korea has been resilient, survived and been raised to the ground. If we ratchet up sanctions on North Korea, the North Koreans are just going to do what they always do, tighten their belts a little bit, and continue to develop. Another problem is that the entire international community has to cooperate in order for sanctions to work. He emphasized that North Korea will find a way to get what it needs otherwise. He said that aside from China there are several other nations that overtly aid North Korea. He asserted that the more the US pressures them to enforce the sanctions, the more the US risks itself coming across as a domineering bully.

3) China Approach: This is the approach taken by the Trump administration during its first few months. China will not ever give us what we really want on North Korea and never support the US if the latter's larger objective is to achieve regime change. Such attitude persists for historical, strategic, and cultural reasons. It is not entirely true that China was allied with North Korea during the Cold War but now regards it as a nuisance. It is important to remember the symbolic role North Korea plays in reinforcing Chinese national identity.

How Should We Pursue a Diplomatic Action Towards NK?

China has been applying more pressure to South Korea for taking actions that can be considered as in South Korea's self-defense than it has been pressuring North Korea. This really leaves us with diplomacy as the only option that that can work. A few necessary options:

1) Close Coordination with South Korea: There is no more critical relationship to the US today than its relationship with South Korea, not only because of the North Korean issue, but also because South Korea is a country in Asia that shares democratic values with the US. The US also has a deep history with South Korea and helped build it up economically. In recent months, however, Washington and Seoul have not coordinated policies as closely as they should. The media in South Korea has recently become obsessed with what it calls "Korea Passing," meaning the US will seek to solve the North Korean problem on its own without consulting Seoul. President Trump and the new South Korean president are not entirely on the same page. When Trump talks about "fire and fury" one day and the South Korean president says no one should be allowed to decide on military action on the Korean peninsula without his permission a few days later, it gives an appearance of disunity, which is exactly what Beijing wants. He also pointed out that we are now eight months into the Trump administration but there is still no US ambassador to South Korea. Aside from that, there are also several key posts in the State Department that remain unfilled.

2) Information Programs: The US should continue its information programs that are directed at North Korea such as the Voice of America. These kinds of activities might at least change the view that some North Koreans have of the US. the US should also continue humanitarian work in North Korea to make clear that whatever political differences exist between the US and North Korea, we do not hold the North Korean people accountable for the actions of their leaders.

3) Open-ended Negotiation: The process of diplomacy should be kept open-ended, such

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as when the US first initiated talks with China during the 1970s. North Korea should be allowed to bring up the issues that are most important to its leadership.

4) Patience in Implementing Policies: We have to realize that North Korea is deeply mistrustful of the US, its allies, and even some of its own allies. It has been emblazoned on the North Korean national consciousness for the past six decades that the country once fought a horrific war against the US in which millions died and many cities were destroyed. It is a country that can remember very easily several decades of continuous American efforts to try to isolate it and it can see how the US has pursued and succeeded in achieving regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries that became its adversaries. If we choose diplomacy, we must be prepared for it not to succeed immediately. We have to understand that North Korea will not abandon its nuclear weapons or missile programs right away. This kind of patience is tricky because in a democracy, the electorate is always somewhat results-oriented and if it does not produce results immediately, it will want to change the policy. This is why we keep going back and forth between deterrence and engagement or some combination of the two. We need to have a more consistent policy pursued over a longer term which will offer the best chance of slowly getting North Korea to modify its behavior.

Q&A

Q: It seems like the North Korean conflict has not changed much after 20 or 30 years. We continue to deal with it. Is reunification the only way to end this issue?

A (Gregg A. Brazinsky): I think you can never resolve the issues that the Korean War was fought over, and the basic political differences between North Korea and South Korea, including differing perspectives of each state's legitimacy, but I do think that you can have a significant reduction of tension between the US and North Korea without reunification. I am increasingly pessimistic that we would never see unification in our lifetime, but I do think it is not too much to hope that there can be a significant reduction of friction between the US and North Korea if the policies are right. China has the capacity to bring North Korea to its knees if it wants to but I am not convinced it that it will ever do so. We underestimate how important North Korea is to China's national identity and to the identity of the Chinese Communist Party, and when you talk to Chinese government officials, you still see that. There is still an underlying sympathy for North Korea in China. I think that the Chinese like seeing North Koreans embarrass the United States secretly. Even if they do not admit it and say "ha ha ha," I think that

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at some level they enjoy seeing this. I am not convinced that we can offer them anything that would be acceptable to us that would in the end get them to really start putting enough pressure on North Korea to get it to abandon its nuclear weapons, which will only go away with a change in regime.

Q: Would the Chinese agree to exchange the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland for that of the two Koreas?

A (Gregg A. Brazinsky): I do not think so. The way China sees it is that Taiwan is a part of China, and the US should not be selling arms to Taiwan in the first place. Why should they put pressure on North Korea to give us something that is rightfully theirs in the first place? From our perspective it makes a lot of sense. We are going to give you back Taiwan and you will give us North Korea, but from the Chinese perspective, it does not make sense. It is important for people who work on this issue to spend more time in China and read Chinese materials because I am not convinced that a lot of the people in the Beltway really understand the Chinese perspective.

A (Amitai Etzioni): We need to learn much more about how the other side looks at it. Explicit or implicit, we will look to recognize Taiwan as an independent state. Moving from implicit to explicit would be one more character.

Q: None of you mentioned unification. It seems to be a central issue and I would like to ask what would be the analogy to the German reunification. I know there is a difference but the emphasis on reunification should be important.

A (Robert L. Gallucci): American diplomats, when they talk to Koreans about subjects like this, always talk about the ultimate goal as the reunification of Korean people. However, I do not think that many people who work on this issue believe that the reunification of the Korean people is going to happen anytime soon. If it does, it will be the result of incredible violence. South Koreans suspect that nobody is really enthusiastic about the reunification of the Korean people other than the Korean people, and the Korean people are divided over how that would happen when South Koreans think under some nice democratic South Korean government, and the North Koreans under some part of the Kim dynasty. The rest of the world from their perspective is hostile. The Chinese certainly are not enthusiastic about a reunited peninsula, particularly if it was reunited under alliance with the US. They are not looking forward to seeing this unification on their border. The South Koreans are suspicious, the Japanese are not

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enthusiastic, and we Americans look at the divided peninsula as an excuse for a forward base of operations and part of our encirclement strategy.

Q: What do you think it would take to deal with North Korea under Kim Jong-un vs Kim Jong-il, who wanted nuclear light water reactors?

A (Robert L. Gallucci): The last time I met with North Koreans was a little less than a year ago and they said that they are a nuclear weapons state and will always be. I could not continue the discussion without legitimizing their nuclear weapons program when we were allied with two countries that had voluntarily committed themselves not to have nuclear weapons. Most of us have one or two models in mind as to why the North Koreans develop nuclear capacity. The happy model is that they want to use nuclear weapons to deter the US from accomplishing regime change, as a defensive and deterrent posture. The other model is that they want to have nuclear weapons so that they can deter the US intervention with threat.

Report by: Sabrina He & Huiwon Yun, Research Intern