

Security Implications of a Nuclear North Korea: Crisis Stability and Imperatives for Engagement

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The DPRK's fifth nuclear test signalled that it is a de facto nuclear state. North's nuclear capability should not be overstated, however. Denuclearizing the DPRK requires a rational assessment of how its nuclear capabilities affect inter-Korean relations and the regional security order. Although the DPRK's nuclear weapons make the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia more dangerous and insecure, the existing stability of deterrence between the nuclear great powers persists, including its effects on the intentions, actions, and decisions of the two Koreas. US and ROK denuclearization policies must address directly the DPRK's security concerns thereby inducing it to freeze its nuclear program.

Key Words: Deterrence, North Korean Nuclear Weapon, Denuclearization, Engagement

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I. Introduction

Many security observers and policy makers in Seoul were profoundly dismayed when North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test on September 9, 2016. In the course of describing the nuclear test as a “nuclear warhead detonation test,” North Korea used the terms “standardization,” “miniaturization,” “lightweight,” and “diversification” (Park and Lee, 2016). A nuclear warhead detonation test is normally conducted with the objective of confirming a design that can be attached to a missile. The latest test made it more likely that North Korea would acquire the capacity to mass-produce nuclear weapons. North Korea’s nuclear tests would no longer be desperate measures; they would become instead a routine activity associated with improving its nuclear arsenal. The North might be able to conduct a nuclear test whenever it wanted. This may lead to an inconvenient truth that North Korea should be treated as a *de facto* nuclear state whether we want it or not (Shilling and Kan, 2015; Wit and Han, 2015; Wit, 2015). This also means that any policy stances regarding North Korea should consider the fact that the North has nuclear weapons. If this is the situation we face, then going forward requires a rational assessment of how North Korea’s nuclear capabilities affect the future unfolding of inter-Korean relations and regional security order in Northeast Asia. This assessment poses important theoretical and empirical questions because North Korea’s nuclear problem now requires detailed and penetrating approaches to what we all have long hoped would never eventuate — an operationally nuclear-armed North Korea (Choi and Bae, 2014).

Before we formulate the realistic ways to deal with North Korea, it is imperative to consider what it means to have North Korea as a nuclear-armed state in the Korean Peninsula. Will North Korea’s nuclear capabilities fundamentally alter the current security order in the Korean peninsula? As the joint statement put forward by Defense Minister Han of South Korea and Secretary of Defense Carter argues, will “North Korean threats — nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, cyber, and conventional military threats” — continue to put at risk the

peace and security of the Peninsula, the region and the United States? (The Department of Defense, 2016) What will be the security implications of North Korea's nuclear weapons to the Korea-US alliance in particular and Northeast Asia in general? What should the regional states do to re-initiate the denuclearization processes via the Six Party Talks?

To answer these questions, we will first discuss whether or not North Korea emerging as a nuclear power in Northeast Asia will fundamentally change the security landscape of the region. In this vein, we argue that a nuclear North Korea is not a game changer. This conclusion implies that Northeast Asia's regional security dynamics essentially will stay the same even with North Korea emerging as a nuclear power; the existing deterrence system provided by the alliance network made up of the US-Korea and the US-Japan alliances is far superior than North Korea's military capabilities, even if Pyongyang is augments its military capabilities with nuclear warheads. Certainly, North Korea's nuclear weapons may complicate the existing regional order, but it will not fundamentally alter the underlying security order of crisis stability defined by a tight balance of mutually assured deterrence capability prevalent in the region (Choi, 2016). Admittedly North Korea's nuclear weapons will require that regional states of Northeast Asia adopt a different set of military strategies and diplomatic responses. Nonetheless, the strategic deterrence system operating for decades between the United States, China, and Russia is rigidly intact and is almost immune to disruption by North Korea's nuclear weapons. Moreover, the alliance system consisting of the United States, Japan and South Korea remains united vis-à-vis North Korea. We are aware that our argument is counterintuitive compared to the prevalent discourse in characterizing North Korea's nuclear venture as "a grave threat to regional security and to international peace and stability" (White House, 2016). We do agree that North Korea's nuclear weapon program is intolerable and should be curtailed in a peaceful manner. Equally, its impact should not be overstated and policy reformulated based on unjustified attribution of present and future impact by North Korea's nuclear force.

One clarification is in order. We believe that North Korea's nuclear armament has no moral justification whatsoever. Nor do we intend to argue that North Korea's nuclear weapons have no negative impact on the security order of Northeast Asia. However, our argument, drawn from the existing deterrence literature, is simply that the emergence of US-North Korean nuclear deterrence will not fundamentally change crisis stability in the Korean peninsula, which has contributed to an absence of war in the region. This conclusion follows because region-wide deterrence is already tight and stable making regional actors prudent and restraining their respective allies in crises. We will discuss this chain of logic more detail manners in the following section.

We also believe that North Korea's nuclear weapon status opens up new opportunities to re-initiate the denuclearization process on the Korean peninsula. In other words, for nearly last three decades, the international community has failed to prevent North Korea's nuclear development because its approach was incoherent when it came to implementing viable and sustainable denuclearization policies. If this judgment is accepted (Moore, 2014; Farago, 2016), then we should be able to formulate ways to construct concrete and concerted approaches to denuclearizing North Korea and making the regime in Pyongyang a normal state in the region. In this vein, we argue that we need to reinstate diplomatic negotiation, that is, all-out engagement with North Korea. Of course, we realize that circumstances in 2016 and beyond differ from the past, which further justifies the rationales to set out more detailed incentives structures in bringing about the denuclearizing process of North Korea, in turn leading to the peace process in the Korean Peninsula. Section III of this article will elaborate our argument.

The central argument of this article is that while North Korea's nuclear weapons are already a dangerous reality in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, the existing stability of deterrence between the nuclear great powers will continue to persist, including its effects on the intentions and actions of the two Koreas. Whether or not North Korea is recognized as a nuclear weapons state by one or more of

these states — which is highly unlikely given their stance at the UN Security Council to impose stringent sanctions on the DPRK nuclear weapons program — it is obvious that North Korea is rapidly becoming a state with operational nuclear weapons. Faced with this challenge, Seoul and Washington must find a strategy that, rather than simply waiting for North Korea's unilateral concessions and outright capitulation, instead actively seeks to moderate its behavior. Doing so requires that they go beyond economic sanctions and punitive isolation. The two allies must recognize that they are primarily responsible for denuclearizing North Korea, and that doing so is also the only way to achieve peace and stability in the Korean peninsula. In short, there is no substitute for diplomacy and direct talks with Pyongyang.

II. Roles of Nuclear Weapons in International Relations Theories

The exact status of North Korea's nuclear weapons is known only to North Koreans. They have declared their nuclear weapons to be deployed and "on duty." Although the realism of their more flamboyant statements about nuking Washington, New York and other long distance targets may be disputed and discounted, at least for a few years of additional long-range missile and nuclear testing, there is little doubt that they could fire a nuclear weapon at South Korea, Japan, or that matter China or Russia. The mere existence of this short and medium-range capability (albeit of unknown reliability) forces states and their respective militaries to recognize this political and military reality.

On the assumption that North Korea's nuclear weapons are already and will become increasingly operationally capable, will they dramatically alter inter-Korean relations and regional security order by reducing the credibility of joint American-South Korean threats of force and providing the North with credible nuclear deterrence capabilities? Will a nuclear North Korea stir up to the existing regional security order in Northeast Asia by using its capabilities not just for

deterrence, but also for compellence (or in the future should agreements be struck, for reassurance)? Will North Korea's nuclear weapon capabilities award Pyongyang with such a strategic advantage that the North could initiate a nuclear first-strike on Seoul whenever it wants to? What does the existing literature in international relations suggest in regard to these critical issues?

This literature emphasizes that nuclear weapons can inflict catastrophic damage far greater than any other weapon from blast, radiation, and thermal effects that are unique to nuclear weapons. A small number of nuclear detonations can quickly annihilate or paralyze a state or a city. Nuclear weapons generate unmatched fear in the minds of strategists and citizens facing an adversary equipped with nuclear weapons (Brodie, 1959). Moreover, it may be impossible to provide perfect air-defence against incoming nuclear missiles because the defence can be defeated by using decoys and multiple warheads (Lewis and Postol, 2012). The missile defense system might not be accurate enough to intercept incoming missiles in the air. It only takes one nuclear missile to penetrate the missile defense system and create a nuclear holocaust. As seen from the Pakistan case, nuclear weapons tend to motivate "a conventionally weak, dissatisfied power, to challenge the territorial status quo with less fear" (Kapur, 2008). The powerful image of nuclear capability will, according to this logic, enhance a nuclear-armed state's diplomatic confidence and bolster aggressive behavior towards their rivals (Alagappa, 2008).

In the case of North Korea, the notion that it is a rogue state — that is, mad, irrational and impulsive — has added to the fear that it will use nuclear weapons for aggressive purposes (Terry, 2014). Relatedly, many fear that the North Korean state, extreme and abusive at home, will impulsively put its limited nuclear weapons to use in pursuit of revolutionary goals, that is, in the service of compellence not deterrence. The additional notion that a rogue state such as North Korea has nothing to lose suggests that it will use its nuclear weapon to realize its political objectives such as unification with South Korea on North Korean terms (Cha, 2014). This argument implies further that North Korea is more likely than not to adopt dangerous strategies

including nuclear blackmail and limited military provocations because Pyongyang may be overconfident about its nuclear weapons. This chain of argument characterizes North's nuclear weapons as a grave threat to the Korean peninsula and a potentially destabilizing factor to the entire Northeast Asia's regional security order (Wit and Town, 2013).

However, some deterrence literature also argues that nuclear weapons are in fact stabilizing. The catastrophic nature of nuclear weapon detonations actually bolsters the deterrence relationship between nuclear-armed states (Powell, 1990). Waltz asserts that "when countries acquire the bomb, they feel increasingly vulnerable and become acutely aware that their nuclear weapons make them a potential target in the eyes of major powers. This awareness discourages nuclear states from bold and aggressive action" (Waltz, 2012 : 4). Furthermore, from a weaker power's perspective, the possession of nuclear weapons compensates for conventional military inferiority and reduces the probability of the use of force by its powerful enemy (Waltz, 1995). To the weaker power, maintaining nuclear deterrence is a safer means to ensure the absence of major conventional war than taking the risk to disarm. This logic means that a rogue state such as North Korea may be very prudent with its nuclear use. It follows that rather than taking additional risks exploiting nuclear threat, Pyongyang will be very cautious since its nuclear capability is its last resort when it comes to deterring US and ROK attack (Park and Lee, 2008). If this argument is correct, then a nuclear-armed North Korea is surprisingly stabilizing to the Korean Peninsula. Thus, nuclear weapons may work by creating a paradox whereby the risk of nuclear catastrophe stabilizes conflicts by lowering the propensity of nuclear-armed states to act impulsively, thereby maintaining peace (defined as the absence of war).

In this vein, North Korea's nuclear weapons will buttress the existing security order of crisis stability in the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia. North Korea's emergence as a nuclear-armed state will raise diplomatic tension and may justify increases in military expenditures by Seoul and Tokyo, a trend that may be accelerated by

the Trump White House. However, this school of deterrence literature suggests that North Korea's nuclear weapons will not alter the security order in the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia — a region consisting of tight webs of mutually assured conventional and nuclear deterrence — but may instead reinforce the existing order.

III. Crisis Stability and an Operationally Nuclear North Korea

Full-scale war could erupt in the Korean peninsula any time. But the probability that this will occur is remote and is a worst-case military scenario. North Korea may be a bad country but it is not a mad country. Indeed, that it tries to overcome its strategic inferiority by acquiring nuclear capabilities is strong evidence of its strategic rationality. Given North Korea's rationality, we argue that in the short to medium-term, North Korea's nuclear weapons will increase crisis stability in the Korean peninsula (Schelling, 1966), defined as the absence of war due to a tight balance of mutual deterrence (Choi, 2016). The risk of military conflict on the Korean peninsula will be diminished by critical technological upgrades such as acquisition of nuclear weapons by North Korea and the maintenance and deepening of conventional and nuclear extended deterrence commitments by the United States for South Korea and Japan. Thus, conventional or nuclear first strikes by either Korea or the United States will remain very unlikely and risky. Our reasoning is as follows.

First, North Korea's nuclear weapon capabilities do not fundamentally change the distribution of power in the Korean peninsula. Allied forces of South Korea and the United States enjoy overwhelmingly superior military capabilities vis-à-vis the North (Cordesman and Hess, 2013). Nuclear weapons will certainly significantly increase North Korea's military capability. But its nuclear capabilities by themselves do not change the fundamentals of the existing security landscape in the Korean peninsula. Second, the two Koreas and the United States know that the benefit of a first strike is militarily uncertain

whereas the cost of a retaliatory strike by the target state is more certain, and the cost would be unbearable to the attacking party whatever the final outcome of renewed all-out war or even a limited war terminated relatively quickly (Powell, 1989; Snyder, 1961; Brams and Marc Kilgour, 1987; Cimbala, 2010; Payne, 2015). Third, nuclear weapons strengthen the existing armistice by circumscribing the offensive roles of force on both sides in the Korean conflict.

The cautionary effects of nuclear weapons are also evident in the relationship of the weak and isolated North Korea with the vastly superior United States and South Korea. The United States can destroy North Korea as a country many times over, but the risk of quick secondary North Korean strikes on its forces and civilians in South Korea constrains U.S. military options. This reality was already an important factor preventing the United States and South Korea from striking the North first, before North Korea had nuclear weapons, and remains the case after it acquired nuclear weapons. However, the risks associated with taking *preventive* military action against North Korea will certainly increase as North Korea weaponizes its nuclear capabilities.

Combined, these three factors enhance stability in the Korean peninsula. At first glance, North Korea's emergence as a nuclear power may generate spiralling security dilemma. But so long as all parties to the conflict prefer the status quo to victory via war, these dynamics will reduce their propensity to commence war in the first place (Posen, 1991). Increased security tension does not necessarily result in hasty miscalculation from either side; both can and will wait, the more so when each is heavily invested in the status quo and increasing means of destruction that threaten those stakes are acquired. Therefore, despite the rise of a threat to one or multiple states' security, crisis stability holds so long as each state is capable of punitive retaliatory strikes and the potential initiator refrains from launching the first attacks due to the high cost of war, low probability of winning and, mostly, the high probability that the target will retaliate. Antagonistic episodes such as diplomatic standoffs and even military skirmishes may constitute tests of the stability of a system,

within the Peninsula or at a regional level, but its stability will rest on whether it can cope with the stresses imposed by such tests, and not on their frequency of occurrence. All in all, although peace kept by maintenance of crisis stability is delicate, sporadic crises can be managed for an indefinite period.

To put this argument more directly, a long-standing crisis stability structure has governed the security order in the Korean peninsula, and continues to do even as North Korea becomes a full-fledged nuclear weapon state. The Korean peninsula is a narrow geographical operational theatre where American and South Korean deterrence of North Korea's use of military force is balanced by North Korea's deterrence of any military attempts by the alliance to attack the North and unify the Peninsula, and *vice versa* (Snyder, 2012; You, 2012; Choi, 2016). Moreover, the fundamental structure of the operational theatre on the Korean peninsula will stay the same regardless of whether North Korea has nuclear weapons or not. The stability of deterrence on the Korean Peninsula is based partly upon geographical proximity of the two Koreas and their resultant unavoidable mutual vulnerability. Seoul is located just forty kilometres south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and northern Seoul is exposed to North Korea's massive artillery and rocket forces. Along the DMZ, both the South and the North concentrated their conventional forces to deter each other from launching the first strike. For example, seventy percent of the North's armed forces are stationed along the 240 km long DMZ. The North's Fourth Division Artillery Corps targets Seoul and its vicinity with 400-500 artillery tubes. To counter the North, Seoul has placed all of its twenty one army divisions and one of its two Marine Corps divisions along the DMZ within 100 km of Seoul for a rapid reaction backed up by its superior naval and air power that can launch surgical strikes. In addition, US forces in Korea provide extended deterrence based on home-based and forward-deployed forces. This robust balance of deterrence forces on the Korean peninsula accumulated during the Cold War era and still remains to be intact.

With or without North Korea's nuclear weapon capability, the combined conventional forces of South Korean and the United States

suffice to deter North Korea from attempting a first nuclear strike (Moon and Lee, 2009). In other words, North Korea's nuclear weapons offset the enormous conventional advantage of the United States and South Korea. To North Korea, its small number of nuclear weapons substitutes for its relatively inferior conventional forces against South Korea and the United States. Conversely, South Korea and the United States are deterred from attacking the North in any realistic military contingency because of an asymmetry of potential damage such as high civilian casualties, industrial destruction and foreign capital flights that would ensue after an inevitable North Korean retaliatory strike on Seoul. Because South Korea is more economically developed, it has far more to lose from an all-out or even a limited war with the North. Overall, North Korea's nuclear weapons will buttress the existing deterrence system, make it even more taut than in the past, and thereby render less likely an attempt by any side to use military force first.

IV. Deterrence Stability and Imperatives for Engagement

As argued above, crisis stability will persevere in the Korean peninsula. The devastating consequence of a nuclear catastrophe prevents the escalation of inter-Korean hostilities in a military contingency to full-scale war, then it strengthens the political and military status quo. A nuclear first strike greatly increases the political and military cost of any first strike. This means that the prolonged status quo will impel South Korea to explore a possibility of negotiating with North Korea, because the catastrophic consequences of using nuclear weapons will make denuclearizing North Korea by force prohibitively costly.

Conversely, North Korean nuclear weapons may not be a barrier to peaceful denuclearization in the Korean peninsula. The impossibility of achieving military victory without incurring unbearable human costs and the grave risk associated with nuclear catastrophe will force South Korea and the United States to explore a set of denuclearization

policies for North Korea always short of using military force to this end. In short, using military force as a means of denuclearization is now inconceivable short of the collapse of North Korea from within. This is the reason why the United States and South Korea have used a range of denuclearization policies at different times, including prolonged negotiation, isolation, coercive diplomacy, and multilateral sanctions to realize a negotiated denuclearization.

Obviously, many factors will account for any decision to engage in negotiation with a state attempting to obtain nuclear weapons. Recognizing the grave risks associated with the use of military force under conditions of reciprocal if asymmetric nuclear deterrence is a start. But initiating peaceful negotiation for North Korea's denuclearization is a task that will be undertaken by South Korea at the outset as it entails working out agreements based on compromise by both North Korea and the United States. A South Korean government willing and able to implement a shift in its policy toward North Korea will be the result of domestic political change in the South that supports creating a positive atmosphere for building confidence measures, reducing inter-Korean tension, and negotiating either bilateral or multilateral negotiated processes that lead first to denuclearization and ultimately to peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. Changes in South Korean policy to denuclearize North Korea depend on how South Korean leaders perceive the North Korean nuclear threat (Oh and Hassig, 2000). Inevitably, nuclear weapons are associated with risks, dangers, catastrophes and fear and in the hands of North Korean leaders, might be viewed as even more dangerous than when they are held by "normal" states. However, we should not deny the security relevance of nuclear weapons for North Korea (Hayes and Moon, 2015). The root cause of North Korea's creation of a nuclear weapons program lies in its perception of a threat from the United States. It is not that North Korea's nuclear weapon amplifies their sense of insecurity. This insecurity existed before they acquired nuclear weapons.

North Korea perceives U.S. and South Korean joint military exercises as a threat to its regime, often citing it as intended to impose the "decapitation of the supreme leadership of the DPRK (Democratic

People's Republic of Korea)" (Al Jazeera, 2016). Thus, from North Korea's perspective, nuclear weapons are intended to deter attacks on the North and to preserve its leadership. So Se Pyong, North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva confirms such a deterrence rationale: "If the United States continues, then we have to make the counter-measures also. So we have to develop and we have to make more deterrence - nuclear deterrence" (Al Jazeera, 2016). North Korea views its security to depend now on nuclear deterrence, whether it is realistic or not. Pyongyang believes that its nuclear capabilities will bolster its national security. And states that feel severely threatened and lack resources to maintain conventional forces likely will pursue nuclear armament if this pathway is open. This means that the real cause of insecurity and its derivative, nuclear armament, as well as the pathways to a solution, lie in the reason why they feel threatened (Moon, 2016), not the other way around.

We must now recognize that unless major shifts in policy are undertaken by the five parties, especially by South Korea and the United States, North Korea will continue to develop a strategic nuclear deterrent aimed at the United States and South Korea. We can also be fairly confident that the world will be better off if North Korea is integrated into Northeast Asia's economy and the world. This may be unpalatable to those who want to persist with ever more harsh sanctions, roll back North Korea's nuclear program, and even aim to collapse the regime in Pyongyang. However, the policy options that South Korea and the United States can take have narrowed now that Pyongyang has nuclear weapons. Unless the United States and South Korea are prepared to either invade North Korea, accept North Korea as a nuclear state, or endure at least another twenty years of Pyongyang's nuclear adventurism, we are left with only one option: engaging the North (Choi, 2015).

Engagement may be defined as deliberate involvement with an adversary in order to achieve joint progress, not appeasement (Delury, 2013). Direct talks that are realistic do not shy away from critical issues to preserve formal diplomatic niceties. Negotiation should be a means to start, not a goal of denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula.

Willingness to negotiate is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Progress on the Korean Peninsula comes from incremental problem solving with some levels of reciprocity defined through engagement (Moon, 2012). The obstacles to engagement are many. Because it is inherently incremental, engagement processes often show no clear visible progress. It is easy for hawks opposed to engagement to attack it because its results cannot possibly keep up with their demands. Both Koreas and the United States missed historic chances such as Geneva Agreed Framework, the September 19 Declaration and the February 29 Agreement to lay the pathway for denuclearization and to build up confidence in peace-making on the Korean peninsula. As mistrust and mutual threat perception deepened, North Korea conducted missile and nuclear tests, in turn resulting in expanding sanctions against North Korea.

However, far from resolving the standoff with the North (Haggard and Noland, 2012), sanctions have made the situation worse. North Korea's ability to sustain its nuclear weapons program does not seem to be weakened, and its regime remained intact even as it increased its nuclear and ballistic missile technologies. To reduce the likelihood of provocation and to prevent further nuclear tests, it is essential to keep North Korea engaged. Seoul and Washington must construct an environment conducive to interaction and negotiation with Pyongyang and build up various channels to communicate with its leaders so that better communication can be established. Now that North Korea proclaims itself to be a nuclear-armed state and demonstrated at least some capability, the world has no choice but to recognize this reality. Consequently, a North Korean denuclearization process will be a long struggle with little prospect of success unless Seoul and Washington lay out a very realistic goal first with the roadmap to achieve it (Sigal, 2011).

A primary goal should be the freezing of North Korea's nuclear program (Shen, 2016). But to get to this point, Seoul and Washington need to address North Korea's national security concerns and act in ways that lower North Korea's threat perception, such as temporary suspension of the joint military exercises by South Korean and the

United States. Since denuclearization of North Korea has to be incremental, it must follow a step-by-step process while building confidence measures among Seoul, Pyongyang and Washington. If North Korea accepts a freeze of North Korea's nuclear program, then Seoul and Washington should be able to demand a suspension of nuclear tests by North Korea as a confidence building measure. In so doing, the suspension of nuclear weapons materials production would be subject to verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). South Korea and the United States should keep the dual track combination of engagement and sanctions until substantial denuclearization is achieved, even if sanctions are reduced and calibrated to the degree and pace of denuclearization. At the same time, they must be able to respond positively to North Korea's moratorium on missile and nuclear tests in ways that are substantive and reduce North Korea's threat perceptions.

Accordingly, Seoul and Washington must announce that they have no hostile intention toward the North and are ready to negotiate. They should make it clear that the contents of the September 19 declaration and February 29 agreement will be respected (Moon, 2008). Thus, Seoul and Washington would not demand denuclearization as a pre-requisite for the reopening of the Six Part Talk. Rather, it will be the final product of the negotiation. If the North agrees to come out to the negotiation table, then all members of the Six Party Talks must agree to reaffirm and endorse the past agreements and declarations. In so doing, the five members of the Six Party Talks can lift in part the current United National Resolution Sanction 2270 and provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea as agreed in February 13, 2007.

Seoul and Washington should make it clear that they are willing to negotiate the terms of ending the truce agreement and give North Korea a set of choices if North Korea is willing to negotiate the process of complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID). Washington can propose to start diplomatic normalization talks with Pyongyang in connection with the denuclearization negotiation with the time framework that, as the CVID ends, the diplomatic normaliza-

tion between the two states will culminate in a non-aggression pact and a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula. As a political gesture, foreign ministers of the Six Party Talks members can visit Pyongyang and sign a non-aggression pact and conclude a peace declaration that creates a nuclear free Korean Peninsula. Should there be any defection or cheating by the North, the whole negotiation process for diplomatic normalization will be halted.

The endgame of revived Six Party Talks is to secure a nuclear Free Korean Peninsula and to institutionalize the stability of Northeast Asia through diplomatic normalizations between North Korea and Japan and the United States and installation of peace treaty between China, the United States and two Koreas. This process would transform the current security dilemma into a nascent security community whereby North Korea's threat perception is overcome and the United States and other parties assure North Korea's security, enabling it to denuclearize.

V. Conclusion

A North Korean nuclear-armed state is not certainly a positive contribution to Northeast Asia's regional order. North Korea's nuclear armament reflects how Seoul and Washington's policy towards Pyongyang has failed. North Korea's fifth nuclear test and many intermediate and long-range missile tests epitomize a grim reality that all states — likely North Korea included — never wanted to face. Increases in North Korea's nuclear capabilities certainly complicate existing deterrence stability in the Korean Peninsula. North Korea may also attempt to use these capabilities for nuclear blackmail and to undertake more aggressive actions, which will surely aggravate hostility between Seoul and Pyongyang.

However, we have advanced a two-part argument regarding security implications of North Korea as a nuclear state. First, we argued that the primary of purpose of wielding a nuclear weapon is deterrence. It is difficult to conceive North Korea's limited nuclear

capabilities as an offensive weapon from a military perspective. Admittedly, Pyongyang could be more provocative in how it behaves towards Seoul, which is situation-dependent (Narang, 2015). Nonetheless, North Korea's leadership knows the potential consequences of the unbearable retaliatory damage it would face if it were to use nuclear weapons in a pre-emptive strike against South Korea. In sum, we argue that North Korea can militarily do little with limited nuclear capabilities as an offensive measure. But its nuclear weapons will certainly work as a minimal deterrent against South Korea and the United States. In short, we argue that crisis stability in the Korean Peninsula is sustainable, even if North Korea has nuclear weapons.

Second, we also argue that, if Pyongyang feels more secure due to its nuclear armament, then addressing the sources of its insecurity directly may open up opportunities to denuclearize North Korea. For this reason, we argue that the first priority of denuclearization has to be directly addressing the security concerns of Pyongyang in a way that induces the North to freeze its nuclear program.

For more than two decades, South Korea and the United States tried to reverse North Korea's nuclear armament via tortuous negotiations and expanding sanctions underpinned by strengthened extended deterrence. Ultimately, all these efforts were futile. The lack of consistency within and between the six parties pursuing denuclearization produced a situation where it was impossible to implement a coherent set of policies. Moreover, elected officials in Seoul and Washington greatly changed the scope and direction of their respective nations' North Korea policy relative to their predecessors. As a result, the five parties ended up relying on short-sighted policies that reacted to North Korea's delinquent behaviors rather than implementing a strategic game plan. Consistency in Seoul and Washington's North Korea policy has long been subject to ideological strife and political feuds. Over the last 20 years, South Korea's approach has oscillated widely in line with leadership changes, with two liberal administrations pushing for reconciliation and two conservative presidents taking hardline stances. If North Korea becoming a full-fledged operationally capable nuclear armed state is unpalatable to South

Korea and its allies and friends, then they must construct a concrete roadmap of engagement with North Korea that leads to the latter's denuclearization. In pursuing a long-term resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem, we need continuity in denuclearization policy that includes schemes for strategic engagement with the regime in Pyongyang. In other words, a coolheaded, realistic approach and meticulously-crafted strategies are vital to effectively setting in motion any mid- and long-term roadmap on denuclearization. This is a daunting task from which there is no alternative but to begin anew.

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