

A NEOFUNCTIONALIST APPROACH TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN NORTH KOREA: WHY THE UNITED STATES SHOULD PRIORITIZE NORTH KOREAN INTEGRATION OVER DENUCLEARIZATION

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Since North Korea began testing intercontinental ballistic missiles, American officials have discussed numerous methods to resolve Korea's nuclear problem. Proposed engagement strategies, most of which prioritize denuclearization in North Korea, include diplomatic negotiations, military engagement, and economic pressure through increased sanctions. This paper will argue that denuclearization should be a secondary objective; achieving a North Korea integrated into international institutions and the world economy would most effectively ensure the United States' security interests. Functionalism successfully guided the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe, increasing both regional stability and economic wellbeing. The United States can help North Korea follow a similar path by supporting its entry into the global market and world organizations. Given the low likelihood of eliminating North Korea's nuclear arsenal, an integrated North Korea would best maintain peace and stability in East Asia.

INTRODUCTION

The Doomsday Clock reads two minutes to midnight (Mecklin 2018). Established in 1945 by prominent members of the Manhattan Project, such as Robert Oppenheimer and Albert Einstein, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists releases an annual diagnosis of progressions and regressions in relations between nuclear states. This year, the hands of the clock are as close to midnight as they have ever been, partly because of uncertainty on the Korean Peninsula (Mecklin 2018). Western media and the American public have long perceived the North Korean government as intentionally belligerent and woefully irrational. U.S. presidents have only encouraged this perspective of the East Asian country. In President Bush's 2002 State of the Union address, he condemned North Korea as part of the "axis of evil" (Bush 2002). President Trump has described Kim Jong-Un as a "madman" (Roy 2017). Contemporary scholars, however, have reached a different conclusion about decision-making under the military regime in Pyongyang; they believe that the North Korean government acts rationally in order to preserve the interests and security of the military regime and, to a lesser extent, the state (Roy 2017, 2–3). Assuming Pyongyang's rationality, how should the United States deal with the government in Pyongyang in a way that best preserves regional stability? There are three existing U.S. engagement strategies on the Korean Peninsula: economic pressure, military posturing, and diplomacy—in the forms that they have been proposed and implemented within the United States, all three strive for denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

In this essay, I will assert that prioritizing denuclearization is misguided – by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each of the denuclearization strategies. I will argue for a fourth engagement strategy: the systematic integration of North Korea into

the world, regardless of its commitment to denuclearization. Given the low likelihood of eliminating North Korea's nuclear arsenal, a neofunctionalist approach to U.S. foreign policy with North Korea would best maintain peace and stability in East Asia.

I will begin this essay by utilizing deterrence theory to prove that nuclear proliferation is not necessarily bad and to establish an impact as to why the United States cannot become complacent under the status quo. Subsequently, I will establish an overarching argument against the feasibility of denuclearization in North Korea. Next, I will refute individual arguments for each of the three denuclearization strategies: economic pressure, military posturing, and diplomacy. Lastly, I will lay out the framework of a neofunctionalist approach to North Korea by discussing its advantages and analyzing its effects in China in the 1990s and early 2000s.

DETERRENCE THEORY'S APPLICATIONS TO THE NORTH KOREAN DILEMMA

Deterrence theory, as it applies to thermonuclear threats, suggests that rational state actors in possession of nuclear weapons will avoid engaging in conflicts with other nuclear states, unless under extreme pressure (Achen and Snidal 1989, 151-152). The theory held true during the Cold War, in which the Soviet Union and the United States refrained from direct conflict with each other even through periods of significant tension. Likewise, deterrence theory can be applied to North Korea. I have asserted that North Korea is a rational actor that prioritizes regime security—assuming the North Korean regime isn't suicidal, Pyongyang understands that any use of nuclear weapons against a foreign adversary would result in a fiery multilateral response by a joint coalition of countries, as well as the possibility of nuclear retaliation (Roy 2017, 7). Kenneth Waltz adds that "The catastrophic nature of nuclear weapon detonations actually bolsters the deterrence relationship between nuclear-armed states" (Choi and Bae 2016, 813). Nuclear countries in conflict—like the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and present-day Pakistan and India—have coexisted without needing to use nuclear weapons against each other, despite tensions and strict ideological differences.

A NUCLEAR NORTH KOREA IS NOT NECESSARILY DANGEROUS—UNLESS ITS SECURITY IS IN QUESTION

A question arises from the deterrence theory: if nuclear deterrence is such a significant stabilizing force, why does the United States need to change anything about the status quo? The dangers lie in uncertainties. In other words, North Korea will refrain from using its nuclear weapons unless it perceives a threat from an insurmountable foreign adversary. For example, if the regime believes that foreign countries are plotting to overthrow its government, it may lash out militarily, possibly deploying nuclear weapons (Choi and Bae 2016, 818). On the other hand, if the regime begins to succumb to extreme economic pressures, it may also threaten to use nuclear weapons against countries instituting sanctions against it (Choi and Bae 2016, 818). The most prudent method of dealing with North Korea, therefore, involves mutual assurances of nonaggression and the establishment of channels of direct communication between North Korea and the rest of the world.

DENUCLEARIZING NORTH KOREA IS INFEASIBLE

To prove the infeasibility of denuclearizing North Korea, I must first establish a distinction between the North Korean government and the North Korean state; while the interests of the North Korean military regime and the interests of North Korean citizens relate to each other, the government has demonstrated a clear preference for preserving the interests of the regime over those of the state when they conflict. Although Chairman Kim has implemented reforms to improve North Korea's economy by initiating a shift towards modest privatization of industry, those reforms are directed towards his paramount objective of regime security (Delury 2017). Given the importance of regime security to Kim Jong-Un's government and given North Korea's inability to defend itself against either South Korea or the United States through conventional forces, rationality dictates that Pyongyang would strive for an alternative security mechanism; that mechanism is nuclearization. Denny Roy explains that North Korea's "nuclear-weapons capability addresses the regime's two primary security concerns": increasing governmental legitimacy internally and deterring attacks from foreign adversaries externally (Roy 2017, 3). David Kang argues that "North Korea has always sought to deter the United States and has viewed the United States as belligerent. Thus, the nuclear program is consistent with the North Korean government's attempts to provide for its own security (Cha and Kang 2004, 245). North Korea suffered heavy losses during the U.S.-led counter attack in the Korean War. Isolated from the international community for seven decades and bordering a highly-developed, hostile force to the south, Pyongyang views nuclear weapons as a necessary deterrence against its more advanced foreign adversaries. Whether its fears are warranted is irrelevant—Pyongyang's perceptions guide its decision-making process. Therefore, seeking denuclearization in North Korea is infeasible because the U.S. government cannot offer an alternative to nuclear deterrence that will guarantee the same level of regime security.

ECONOMIC PRESSURE WILL NOT FORCE NORTH KOREA TO SURRENDER ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Despite Chinese opposition against sanctions that may undermine the stability of Kim Jong-Un's regime, the United States has upheld some level of economic sanctions against North Korea since the end of the Cold War. These sanctions have played a major part in discouraging trade between the United States and North Korea and have contributed to the impoverishment of the North Korean state (Kim and Martin-Hermosillo 2013, 101). But stricter U.S. sanctions, even those instituted in conjunction with the UN, are unlikely to convince the regime to denuclearize. First, trade with China and South Korea will greatly relieve any economic pressure from UN sanctions—after all, China accounts for 90 percent of North Korean trade volume (Albert 2018). And China is not the only state that has a vested interest in North Korean stability; South Korea has recently revitalized relationships with North Korea, vowing to work in good faith towards the reunification of the two Korean states. Although Seoul continues to support existing sanctions in some capacity, increasing sanctions at this critical juncture in negotiations between the two Koreas

would work against President Moon Jae-In's diplomatic progress (Radio Free Asia 2018). Therefore, increasing sanctions would alienate both Beijing and Seoul and have an insufficient effect on the state of the North Korean economy. Remember also the distinction between the North Korean state and the North Korean regime; even if sanctions may hurt the state, Pyongyang has long prioritized its own security and nuclear capabilities over the welfare of North Korean citizens (Roy 2017, 2). In summary, UN or U.S. sanctions fail on two counts. First, if the sanctions have little effect on the North Korean economy, the United States will only alienate China, South Korea, and North Korea, preventing the U.S. from playing a significant role in a diplomatic solution. Second, any pressure the sanctions do place on North Korea's economy will fall primarily upon the shoulders of North Korean citizens rather than the regime itself (Kim and Martin-Hermosillo 2013, 101). Therefore, it is unlikely that further UN sanctions against North Korea will advance the United States' interests.

REFUTING THE ARGUMENT THAT CHINA WILL HELP DENUCLEARIZE NORTH KOREA

While U.S. sanctions have had little success in turning the tide against nuclearization in North Korea, scholars have suggested that convincing China to implement tougher sanctions may achieve better results. China remains North Korea's closest ally, as well as its largest trading partner (Song 2011, 1135). As of 2017, China accounted for 90 percent of North Korea's trade volume and has provided a significant amount of foreign aid to North Korea (Albert 2018). In addition, China's government has indicated a clear desire for nuclear nonproliferation in Asia. In 2006, Beijing condemned North Korea and worked with other countries to punish Pyongyang for pursuing nuclear weapons (Song 2011, 1134). China has also advocated for the resumption of the Six Party Talks, discussions between China, the United States, North and South Korea, Russia, and Japan that sought to denuclearize North Korea (Albert 2018). Considering China has both an apparent ability and an apparent incentive to pressure North Korea into denuclearization, scholars have argued that denuclearization remains a possibility if China contributes.

But why hasn't China applied stricter sanctions against North Korea? China's foreign policy towards North Korea involves a careful calculus of balancing Beijing's desire that China remains the only nuclear power in East Asia and its desire that North Korea remains an independent state (Song 2011, 1139–1140). In the past, China has blocked the most severe sanctions suggested at United Nations Security Council meetings in order to avoid "placing Pyongyang under pressure strong enough [to] indirectly topple the regime" (Roy 2017, 6). Beijing has two primary reasons to fear the collapse of the North Korean government. First, North Korea's collapse might lead to reunification of the Korean Peninsula and place South Korea, a strong U.S. ally hosting American military bases, on China's borders; and second, North Korea's nuclear weapons would be unaccounted for in the resulting disorder of a power vacuum (Roy 2017, 6). Therefore, Beijing values preserving North Korean stability over denuclearization and would oppose instituting severe sanctions on North Korea.

Sanctions have historically failed and will continue to fail in North Korea. De-

spite seventy years of international sanctions and economic isolation, the North Korean regime has continued to pursue nuclear weapons while engaging in illicit activities like selling nuclear technology to Egypt, Iran, Syria, Iran, and Yemen to bolster its economy (Chung 2016, 107). As long as Kim Jong-Un believes that nuclear weapons will ensure regime security, economic sanctions will only alienate the North Korean leader and escalate tensions between the nuclear powers (Kim and Martin-Hermosillo 2013, 106).

THE DANGERS OF MILITARY POSTURING ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

There are two methods of military engagement in North Korea. The first involves direct warfare through either military strikes or total warfare. Since North Korea first obtained nuclear capabilities in 2006, very few scholars still support this route. As Kenny Roy puts it, “opting for a preventive total war would be a perverse choice given that avoiding a terrible, costly conflict is the reason the international community is trying to get North Korea to de-nuclearize.” Because of the overwhelming consensus on the low payoffs and high risks of war in North Korea, I will focus on the second method: “hawk engagement.”

ANALYZING THE POTENTIAL RISKS AND WEAKNESSES OF “HAWK ENGAGEMENT”

Supporters of “hawk engagement” argue that denuclearization can be best obtained by putting military pressure on North Korea. While this method contains aspects of economic pressure as well, its emphasis on military posturing differentiates it from other engagement strategies. Victor Cha, the scholar who coined the term, calls for a strategy of “malign neglect:” “The United States and its allies would maintain vigilant containment of the regime’s military threat and would intercept any vessels suspected of carrying nuclear- or missile-related materials in and out of the north” (Cha and Kang 2004, 251). He continues his description by detailing various methods in which the United States would develop more “long-range, deep-strike capabilities” in hopes that such militarization would pressure Pyongyang into increasing its own militarization as well (Cha and Kang 2004, 251). The strategy follows along the lines of Reagan’s Soviet Union strategy; Cha hopes to strain North Korea’s budget by forcing the country to militarize in response to the United States’ provocations. Eventually, he expects North Korea’s economic woes will force the country to collapse, much like the Soviet Union did in 1991 following decades of military pressure by the United States.

There are three main problems with Cha’s proposal: (1) Cha relies heavily on China to do nothing as the United States suffocates North Korea to death, (2) the U.S. needs South Korea’s cooperation to carry out “hawk engagement,” and (3) North Korea may retaliate militarily. The first issue has already been addressed; Beijing values North Korean sovereignty and stability highly. The Chinese government, therefore, will not participate or agree to extreme U.S. military pressure on North Korea, especially if the final objective is the collapse of the North Korean regime. Second, the United States can only exert significant military pressure on North Korea with Seoul’s agreement; without Seoul, the U.S. cannot send more American troops to the Korean Peninsula or conduct more joint military exercises with the South Korean military.

President Moon's Chief of Staff Im Jong-seok expects talks to "fundamentally remove the danger of armed clashes and ease fears of war" (Kim 2018). Im Jong-Seok's hopes are in line with President Moon's agenda, which prioritizes good faith negotiations with North Korea rather than escalation of tensions; therefore, it is unlikely that Seoul will agree to a greater U.S. military presence in South Korea. Third, as Cha acknowledges, "Pyongyang states clearly that they would consider isolation and sanctions by the United States an act of war" (Cha and Kang 2004, 253). "Hawk engagement" has the potential to provoke military conflicts—possibly nuclear war—between North Korea and the United States. Cha responds, however, by claiming that "isolation is the least likely strategy to provoke war, inasmuch as the remaining options (including preemptive military strikes) are all much more coercive" (Cha and Kang 2004, 253). In making this assumption, Cha assumes that the available options are "hawk engagement" or a direct military strike, ignoring the possibility of forgoing denuclearization all together. The possibility of nuclear war cannot be ignored; while Cha's strategy may be safer than direct war, it has much higher risks than diplomatic negotiations. It is paramount that the United States pursue the method best suited for fulfilling its interests—regional peace and security—rather than blindly chasing after denuclearization.

DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD FOCUS ON NORTH KOREAN INTEGRATION RATHER THAN DENUCLEARIZATION

The Trump Administration took over the White House office at a critical time in the U.S.-North Korea relationship. Despite President Trump's fiery rants against Kim Jong-Un, the State Department has made headway in peaceful negotiations with North Korea. In June of 2018, President Trump and Chairman Kim met at an unprecedented summit in Singapore. The two sides seem to be finding common ground on certain issues, but the Trump administration has explicitly stated that its priority in peace talks is denuclearization (Rosenfeld and Chandran 2018). In response, Pyongyang has dodged direct answers to the question of denuclearization, declaring that it will need strong guarantees for the long-term security of its regime and the security of its borders (Rosenfeld and Chandran 2018).

USING THE SUNSHINE POLICY TO ANALYZE A NEOFUNCTIONALIST APPROACH TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN NORTH KOREA

Diplomacy like the talks between Trump and Kim is not totally unprecedented. The Sunshine Policy, a functionalist policy adopted by South Korean officials during the Clinton administration, reaped significant successes. North Korean and South Korean leaders met for the first time in history in 2000, and signed a five-clause agreement, paving the first steps towards integration. Following the meeting, the two countries opened dialogues for greater economic cooperation, military officers met to reduce tensions across the demilitarized zone, and families separated since the 1953 Korean War cease-fire were united (Im and Choi 2011, 795). The meeting also had global implications; by 2002, Kim Jong-II, then leader of North Korea, had met with U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright and Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi (Kim

2017, 169). North Korea was beginning to emerge from its half century-long period of isolation. But after the Clinton administration left office, the Bush administration dramatically altered U.S. relations with North Korea. In 2002, President Bush condemned North Korea as part of the “axis of evil” in his State of the Union address and North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (Bush 2002). The Six Party Talks in 2003 accomplished little and stalled indefinitely in 2008 (Kim 2017, 167). While promising, these talks were ineffective because they required North Korean denuclearization. Pyongyang has repeatedly demonstrated that it is willing to make major concessions to guarantee regime security: the government has forfeited North Korea’s economic wellbeing, its position in the international order, and its relationship with global powers like the United States and China in its bid for nuclearization. Evidently, the regime believes that nuclear weapons are key to its continued survival. Any attempts to separate the regime from its source of security will require irrefutable assurance of the North Korean government’s future security—given the history of distrust between the two nations, the United States will be hard pressed to convince Pyongyang that North Korea can achieve the same level of security through methods other than nuclear deterrence (Choi and Bae 2016, 820–821). Therefore, if the United States’ prerequisite for real negotiation is denuclearization and North Korea’s prerequisite for negotiation is absolute assurances of security, talks will advance nowhere.

The failures of the Sunshine Policy highlight the necessity for a change in U.S. strategy towards North Korea. It is uncertain when, if ever, the two countries will have as promising a forum to address their mutual concerns. If the Trump Administration continues to single-mindedly pursue denuclearization, North Korea will likely emerge from the summit as a nuclear power, still unintegrated into the world. Markus Bell and Geoffrey Fattig write that “as the risk of war rises, hopes for a diplomatic breakthrough will be dependent on the international community shifting away from strategies that pursue the diplomatic and economic isolation of Pyongyang with denuclearization as the end goal, to measures that encourage the regime to abide by international norms” (Bell and Fattig 2018, 31). Considering the risks posed by a nuclear pariah state with a history of enmity with the United States, Washington should shift its priorities away from the unachievable goal of denuclearization and instead pursue North Korean integration.

INTRODUCING A NEOFUNCTIONALIST APPROACH TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN NORTH KOREA

Neofunctionalism argues that economic and political integration between two states has positive spillovers for both states; essentially, integration in one domain will lead to integration in other domains, promoting mutual benefits (Hwang and Kim 2015, 42). Supporters of a neofunctionalist solution to international issues in North Korea argue for a peaceful solution that results in North Korean integration into international institutions and economic organizations like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. However, many current proponents of neofunctionalism in North Korea also believe that denuclearization is a necessary part of the integration process. Hazel Smith explains this phenomenon—obsession with denuclearization—

by arguing that policy dealing with North Korea has become “securitized” (Smith 2000, 594). Smith claims that because the public perceives North Korea as “bad” and “mad” (belligerent and irrational), economic, welfare, and humanitarian issues have given way to the elephant in the room: the nuclear issue (Smith 2000, 612-613). The United States, when formulating its grand strategy for engagement, should heed Smith’s evaluation—denuclearization is not the final objective; instead, creating a peaceful, stable East Asia and improving the living conditions of impoverished North Korean citizens better encapsulates what should be the United States’ objectives in North Korea.

BENEFITS OF A NEOFUNCTIONALIST APPROACH TO NORTH KOREA: PRIORITIZING PEACE AND STABILITY

The greatest advantage of a neofunctionalist approach that does not prioritize denuclearization (henceforth known as the *sin* denuclearization approach) is that the United States can initiate the path towards greater dialogue by diffusing one of Pyongyang’s security concerns. The benefits are threefold. First, the success of the strategy is not contingent on the willingness of North Korea to dismantle its nuclear system, the culmination of seven decades of international isolation and the regime’s source of security. Second, taking denuclearization off the hyperbolic table will allow the United States greater freedom to negotiate for its human rights and economic interests in North Korea. Third, the approach directly benefits North Korea economically, while indirectly benefiting the United States and its allies by promoting greater stability in East Asia. Sung Chull Kim and David Kang argue that economic integration produces economic interdependence “in which expanding economic ties between states. . . reduce adversarial relations. An increase in the benefits that the states might receive from crafting good economic relations can alter their overall policy objectives” (Kim and Kang 2009). Such alterations to their policy include further transparency in the states’ relationship with each other, further cooperation in areas of shared interest, and de-escalation of tensions, specifically military conflicts. Yet another positive spillover of economic integration is the possibility of political integration (Hwang and Kim 2015, 42). As North Korea is exposed to the flow of ideas that accompanies the flow of goods across borders, policy will shift towards further privatization of industry, more humane laws, and environmental protections in line with the rest of the world’s laws. Therefore, economic interdependence not only acts as another deterrence against military conflict in East Asia, it also will inevitably lead North Korea towards greater liberalization in areas outside of economic policy. While those who demand denuclearization as a prerequisite for integration (henceforth known as the *pro* denuclearization approach) expect North Korea to make the first step towards regional integration and peace by dismantling its nuclear facilities and nuclear weapons, the *sin* denuclearization approach gives the United States the advantage in terms of pursuing economic, human rights, and environmental interests while also fostering greater global security.

Normalization’s positive impact on issues beyond security cannot be understated—an integrated North Korea may improve its human rights, free trade policies, and liberalize. Markus Bell and Geoffrey Fattig write that “if nuclear capability brings

the leadership the security that it lacked in the past—and this should be the case if the nuclear capability of the country is acknowledged by the international community—then North Korean leaders will be more likely to discuss concessions on human security issues” (Bell and Fattig 2018, 43–44). North Korea would be more willing to improve on its poor track record for human rights, allow greater privatization of its economy, and open up its borders to more global trade, which would lead to greater overall living conditions for the country’s 25 million inhabitants. Normalization will also decrease the volume of North Korea’s illicit trading in the black market; such illicit trading includes human and drug smuggling and transfers of nuclear technologies to authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes like Syria and Iran (Bell and Fattig 2018, 34; Chung 2016, 107). Such trade accounts for forty percent of North Korea’s legitimate exports as of 2016 (Chung 2016, 107). North Korean integration into world economic markets will decrease the country’s dependency on the black market for trade revenue. A neofunctionalist approach to North Korea will both increase global security and incentivize North Korea to make changes to its problematic economic and human rights policies.

RESPONDING TO THE RISKS OF A SIN DENUCLEARIZATION APPROACH

There are few risks to a sin denuclearization approach. First, North Korea may choose not to integrate into the world. In this case, the United States may choose to resort to less secure methods of dealing with the North Korean crisis like pressuring North Korea to denuclearize. However, because North Korea has economic reasons to join the global market and because the United States can always revert to traditional methods of dealing with an uncooperative North Korea—such as increased sanctions and military containment—North Korea has strong incentives to integrate. Second, a nuclear North Korea may lead to further development of nuclear weapons in Asia as a response. However, the only two countries with the capability to develop such weapons in the near future are Japan and South Korea. Both reside under the United States’ nuclear umbrella and are signatories of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty—neither have the advantage North Korea has of masquerading as a rogue state outside the bounds of international norms. Additionally, considering China is both Japan and South Korea’s largest trading partner and considering China’s aversion to nuclear proliferation in East Asia, the probability of Japan or South Korea developing nuclear weapons is exceedingly low (Roy 2017, 6).

THE UNITED STATES’ SUCCESSFUL NEOFUNCTIONALIST STRATEGY IN CHINA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Although controversial because of the emergence of China as a superpower, the United States’ neofunctionalist approach to China at the turn of the century did bring about an era of stability in East Asia that has lasted to modern day. According to Thomas Christensen, “if the goal of U.S. foreign policy in the early 1990s was to stay engaged in East Asia. . . so as to encourage regional economic interdependence, the early growth of multilateral institutions, and a greater role for China in these processes, then U.S. policy has been a fantastic success” (Christensen 2006, 106).

Applying the same approach to North Korea will have many benefits and none of the detriments. Integrating North Korea will stabilize the country as well as introduce the regime to mandated international norms. Since its globalization, China has accepted human rights laws, limits on pollution, and other “status quo” measures to a certain extent. North Korea, ruled by one of the most regressive regimes in the world, can only stand to improve from the ideological influences of international institutions.

Liberalization of trade and the shift from a command economy to a quasi-capitalist society has allowed China’s economy to grow extremely quickly. China was the last of many East Asian countries, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, to shift from power to wealth; each of those countries loosened domestic controls and government power to achieve greater wealth from a more privatized market (Delury 2017). North Korea has powerful economic incentives to join the trend, especially after China maintained a one-party rule after moving towards free trade. The best-case resulting from trade liberalization would entail North Korea transitioning towards a more democratic system of government and the worst-case scenario is better average living conditions, greater access to technologies, and a healthier economy in North Korea (Dornbusch 1992, 73-77). North Korean integration will also open the country up to greater international criticism of regressive laws in international forums. The United Nations, World Trade Organization, and other international institutions will allow other countries to address the significant shortcomings of human rights laws in North Korea and generate greater pressure for the North Korean regime to reform. From a humanitarian perspective, integrating North Korea will improve the condition of its impoverished, abused citizens.

CONCLUSION

Denuclearization and neofunctionalism sin denuclearization are both strategies that strive to achieve the ultimate goals of peace and security. However, prioritizing denuclearization will lead to increased tensions between North Korea and the United States and has a low probability of resolving the conflict. Seven decades of United Nations sanctions have failed to prevent North Korea’s path towards nuclearization. China’s inaction on the matter and Pyongyang’s prioritization of the regime over the state all but guarantees the continued failure of economic pressure as a method of persuading North Korea to denuclearize. Military pressure, whether through surgical strikes and direct warfare or through “hawk engagement” will work against South Korea’s neofunctionalist agenda and risks nuclear war with North Korea. Diplomatic negotiations are promising, but the Trump administration cannot continue to pursue denuclearization as a prerequisite for further negotiations. If Washington continues to prioritize denuclearization while Pyongyang prioritizes absolute regime security, negotiations will be doomed to fail. The United States should take the proactive first step towards normalization of relationships by acknowledging North Korea as a nuclear state and offering to help North Korea integrate into the world. By taking a neofunctionalist approach to foreign policy on the Korean peninsula, Washington can best assure the safety and security of the United States and its East Asian allies.

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