

North Korean Nuclear Threat and South Korea's Deterrence Strategy

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I. Introduction

To South Korea, North Korea is a military threat to be deterred and also a partner for unification. Unlike between usual rival states, status quo or stability between two incomplete sovereign states does not constitute an equilibrium. Two Koreas want to achieve full sovereignty on its own, and temporary peace based on mutually deterred state is just a transitory state of affairs.

North Korean government has officially proposed a roadmap of gradual unification based on the concept of federation. Having experienced the Korean War, however, military means cannot be excluded from North Korean strategies of unification. It is highly uncertain that North Korean military power is purely for defensive purposes. If North Korea still aims at unification through offensive war, gradual process of unification is a far end state which is possible only with a new North Korean leadership which is less aggressive and more prone to reconciliation.¹

In this process, South Korean strategy of deterrence is a part of South Korea's North Korea strategy in a broader sense. Deterrence itself is not a purpose, but only a basis on which two Koreas start a negotiation for reconciliation and ultimately unification. South Korea has tried to combine two pillars of deterrence and sanction to establish a balance of power between two Koreans, upon which they can negotiate for future reconciliation and engagement with the North.

Theoretically, deterrence is premised upon several elements such as actors' rationality and self-interests. Deterrence is possible when a defender displays sufficient capability, credibility with a certain level of mutual communication. Inter-Korean relations before Kim Jung Un took power, tend to be based upon mutually shared concepts of rationality, evaluation of capacity with frequent communications, even though communications entailed mutual conflicts and even antagonism. Yet it is true that deterrence is possible when the concept of deterrence is shared and socially constructed.

II. Thinking about deterrence theory with North Korean question

1. North Korea as a self-declared nuclear state

After Kim Jong Il's death in 2011, North Korea proposed itself as a formal nuclear state,² and subsequently security threat from Kim Jung Un's new regime has been on the rise. Kim Jung Un has advanced the so called, "*Byungjin Strategy*," meaning a strategy aiming at both economic development and the building of nuclear weapons simultaneously. On March 31, 2012, North Korea declared that it is now a constitutional nuclear power and it will not pursue the purpose of denuclearization. This strategy is radically different from his father's, since Kim Jong Il at least did not deny the denuclearization of North Korea as the final objective of negotiations with neighboring powers. After conducting the third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, North Korea has endeavored to enhance its capability for nuclear weapons and also to increased conventional threats to South Korea and its neighbors. This poses serious challenges to South Korea's concept of deterrence, and it is not easy to relate the purpose of deterrence to the ultimate goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and unification.

It will be improbable that North Korea will decrease nuclear buildups, and even more improbable that the North will give up its nuclear programs without a high level of pressure for

¹ For the assumptions of offensive realists, see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001)

² North Korea issued the document "Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted," and declared that it is "a full-fledged nuclear weapons state" after plenary meeting of Workers' Party Central Committee on March, 31, 2013.

denuclearization. With increased level of nuclear weapons, it becomes more challenging to deter North Korean.³ It is to be noted that North Korean nuclear weapons serve multiple purposes simultaneously: enhancing its deterrent power; consolidating its regime by showing technological development to its people; inducing economic assistance from outside powers. Under this situation, Kim Jung Un will seriously consider giving up nuclear weapons only if the threat to his regime security becomes imminent and realistic. North Korean nuclear weapons are not just to be deterred, but to be dismantled, and negotiated for inter-Korean dialogue, which makes the task of deterring quite complicated. Most of all, deterring North Korean nuclear attack is most important, as it is directly related to Korean people's lives.

2. Is North Korea deterrable?: Rethinking assumptions of deterrence theory

Deterrence as a theory is based on the assumption of actors' rationality. As deterrence aims at the attacker's inaction by threatening retaliatory harm, it influences the attacker's risk calculus. The assumption of rational adversary is subject to general skepticism and to specific doubts when dealing with the so-called rogue states or terrorists. Rational decision makers are supposed to make decisions based on logical process of information free of biases and distortion.⁴ Some analysts argue that one flaw of deterrence theory is, then, it posits a rational actor, and rationality will guide the actor to evade risk taking which will provoke its own destruction. The prospect of unpredictable leader with unknown levels of risk acceptance highly complicates the plausibility of deterring the opponent. For example, although Kim Jung Un is functionally rational, there may be many psychological, political elements for biases which will increase the likelihood of non-rational, or sub-rational behavior.⁵

However, as various literature has shown, people are resistant to information that are incoherent to their cognitive framework and belief system. As Stein argues, recent development of cognitive psychology demonstrates the limit of decision makers' rationality. Leaders retain a number of heuristics and biases especially in times of risk and uncertainty which impair the process of judgment. Also decision makers and specialists tend to resort to the option of military action and war, as they are deeply grounded in strategic thinking all the time. Adherence to heuristics and biases make decision makers resist dissonant information to preserve personal consistency.⁶

There are ample basis to think that this tendency will be reinforced under the regime of dictatorship. The dictator with absolute decision power can make important decision based on personal judgment. When he or she already formed a specific frame of evaluating the strategic environment, it will be hard for the dictator to be open to new information. If the legitimacy of the dictatorship depends on the performance of the only dictator, there will be high cost of changing the course of past decision, because it may prove the wrong performance so far. In the case of Kim Jung Un's North Korea, political power is highly concentrated on the dictator. Especially in the initial stage of political consolidation, other political elites than Kim Jung Un are afraid of being purged in the middle of political succession and turmoil. Not guided or helped by fearful bureaucrats, young and

³ With the development of North Korean nuclear weapons, the game of nuclear deterrence and balance of terror began. For the difference between balance of power and balance of terror, see Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History & Theory*(New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 177-178. He writes that "with the balance of terror...the calculations are quite different. Here, deterrence is everything, and is achieved through the threat of unendurable punishment. If the threat ever has to be implemented, the result is an all-out nuclear war, with catastrophic consequences for both sides. Both sides have a powerful incentive to avoid action which requires the deterrent threats ever to be implemented. If nuclear weapons are ever used, then deterrence will have failed. Whereas war in the balance of power system was a legitimate and appropriate part of the balancing process, in nuclear deterrence it signifies the catastrophic failure of that process."

⁴ Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8

⁵ Derek D. Smith, *Deterring America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); James H. Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism: US National Security Policy after 9/11*(London: Routledge, 2007)

⁶ Janice Gross Stein, "Rational Deterrence against "Irrational" Adversaries? No Common Knowledge," in T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 62-63

inexperienced leader should make critical decisions and show his infallibility to consolidate his own power.

Cognitive psychology also demonstrates that political leaders are subject to attribution error and loss aversion. As people tend to exaggerate dispositional factors over situational things, they will criticize others' decision rather than contemplate on the overall strategic environments. Also leaders are risk averse when things go well, but become more risk acceptant when things are going badly.⁷ Kim Jung Un, after three years of assuming power, has criticized the United States and South Korea in a coherent fashion for these countries' attempt to regime elimination and military antagonism. North Korea's inner and external situation has posed serious threat to regime survivability, but it is doubtful if Kim Jung Un reached a rational evaluation of his own country's survivability. Under worsening situation, the possibility of more risk-acceptant behavior such as more frequent provocation, nuclear tests, or even military attack becomes stronger.

Then, deterring North Korea will be harder than the literature on deterrence usually assumes. Arguments on deterring rogue states actually deal with this difficulty. Rogue state describes states which "brutalize their own people, display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, are determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, sponsor terrorism around the globe, and reject basic human values."⁸ Rogue states under dictatorship do not protect their own people, risking their lives and general welfare of the country. Dictator attempts to preserve his own political power, with the minimum winning coalition which will perpetuate this political rule.

In this case, threatening massive harm to the people of the challenger will not deter aggressive action. As far as the dictator may survive and reserve political power in spite of considerable loss, he or she may attempt to change the status quo with the expectation that the attack may be rewarded.

What is worse for North Korea is that the ultimate situation of political failure will be unification by absorption with the leadership of South Korea. When unified in the favor of South Korea and the alliance with the United States, the final fate of Kim Jung Un as a person will be under serious uncertainty. There have been diverse criticism of North Korea's human rights situation, and the international society under the leadership of the United Nations may put Kim Jung Un under the international trial for this wrongdoings.

This situation quite complicates the possibility of deterring Kim Jung Un when he decides to use military means including nuclear weapons for his own survival. Under hypothetical situations under public revolt in the North against Kim's rule, all-out war possibly started from border clashes with South Korea, or surgical strike to nuclear facilities by the ROK-US alliance when needed, Kim Jung Un will not hesitate to use nuclear weapons.⁹ This situation resembles the difficult case of deterring terrorists who are willing to die for some other values and causes. Under the most desperate situation, Kim Jung Un will risk his own life to destroy South Korea for his own cause or honor. This is the case of what Arreguín-Toft named as unconventional deterrence. When the adversary is motivated by some sort of nationalism or religious inspiration and willing to sacrifice his own life, it will be hard to threaten and deter him. When Kim Jung Un resorts to nuclear weapons expecting the preservation of this own life, or leaving the legacy, usual threat will not effect the desired outcome.¹⁰

Deterrence applied not just to theory but to strategy as well. As Morgan argues, rationality assumption is essential in developing deterrence theory, but deterrence strategy does not necessarily require this rationality assumption. What is needed in deterrence strategy as practice is "sufficient fear

⁷ Stein, "Rational Deterrence against "Irrational" Adversaries? No Common Knowledge," p. 66

⁸ Smith, *Deterring America*, p. 14

⁹ North Korea's formal position on using nuclear weapons are indicated during the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea on April, 2013, declaring that "the nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army to repel invasion or attack from a hostile nuclear weapons state and make retaliatory strikes; The DPRK shall neither use nukes against the non-nuclear states nor threaten them with those weapons unless they join a hostile nuclear weapons state in its invasion and attack on the DPRK."

¹⁰ Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "Unconventional Deterrence: How the Weak Deter the Strong," in T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 209

of the consequences of the threatened retaliation to not do what has been indicated. The underlying perceptions and judgments that constitute and are shaped by this fear and that lead to abandoning plans to attack may be irrational, rational, or some combination of the two.”¹¹

Then, the most crucial factor will be the clear and uncompromising determination to attack the adversary. Deterrence succeeds when the strength of the will to retaliate is fully dictated. In the case of North Korea, Kim Jung Un may attempt to use nuclear weapons hoping that South Korea and the United States do not retaliate with nuclear weapons to save the Peninsula from nuclear disaster, and that he may begin to negotiate preserving his own position. Even with irrational decision to destroy South Korea with the North, strong determination of South Korea will make Kim think twice.

From the above, one thing is clear: deterrence is context-specific. When the defender tries to deter the challenger, he needs to understand the latter's history, culture, language, religion, world views, and so on.¹² Then, it is to be noted that deterrence has the subject aspect of the cost-benefit calculation. The equilibrium between the deterred and the deterrer cannot be sought a priori, but only through complex evaluation of specific strategic context. What is unacceptable damage and what is the desired benefit will be decided by particular contexts in which the deterrence game is being played. In the case of inter-Korean relations, Korean people are divided wishing for reunification regardless where they live. But reunification means the radical transformation of the current political system, and two Koreas will resist being absorbed by the other, deterring not only military attack, but also political attempt to have the initiative for reunification. As the power gap between two Koreas becomes wider and Kim Jung Un feels more threatened to be absorbed by the other, he may attempt to resist the unification by the South with different forms of all-out war including nuclear war. As the cost-benefit calculus for Kim Jung Un's nuclear attack will be influenced by changing inter-Korean relations, how we deter North Korean attack will also change.

III. Founding the regime of mutual deterrence between two Koreas

1. The need for immediate deterrence against North Korean attack

Classical approach to deterrence posits it as self-evident.¹³ However, as deterrence is inherently psychological and perceptual one, we have to take into account the process by which involved party share common or conflictual understanding of the meaning of deterrence and also the process of learning. As the concept of deterrence among concerned parties are not exogenously given, we have to pay attention to the process in which how parties depend on the process of perception and learning, and the practice of sharing meanings.¹⁴ South Korean and Kim Jung Un's North Korea are at the very initial stage of learning how the other party acts. Especially the future of Kim Jung Un's strategic concept depends on future political situations in side North Korea which is subject to unpredictability.

Although it is true that the very core element of deterrence is rationality, deterrence is a social construction in a broader sense and the concept of rationality is context-dependent. We cannot know the opponent's concept of rationality, capability and resolve, and how these concepts depend on its own political surroundings. If both Koreas, divided but aiming at unification, wants to share the regime of deterrence, there should be the efforts to form discourse that shape both actor's knowledge, type of communication, and understanding of reality. Here the question is how and in what way Kim

¹¹ Patrick Morgan, "North Korea and Nuclear Deterrence," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, 13-11(2004), p. 10.

¹² Stein, "Rational Deterrence against "Irrational" Adversaries? No Common Knowledge," p. 77.

¹³ See various arguments in Keith B. Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age* (Lexington : University Press of Kentucky, 1997); Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory: The Search for Credibility*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Therese Delpech, *Deterrence in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Cold War: For a New Era of Strategic Piracy*(Santa Monica, Rand, 2012); David G. Coleman and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Real-World Nuclear Deterrence: The Making of International Strategy*(Westport, Praeger, 2006)

¹⁴ For a constructivist approach to nuclear use, see Nina Tannenwald, *The nuclear Taboo: the United States and the Non-use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945*(Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Jung Un's North Korea is rational and if it is deterrable in a traditional sense. Scholars studying deterrence address the question of whether rogue states are deterrable. They argue that imbalances of interests and commitments among opponents, psychological barriers, and the rationality of irrationality is so challenging that deterrence is highly limited.

In the case of Kim Jung Un's regime whose sustainability depends upon the success of the so-called *Byungjin* strategy, successful deterrence by South Korea may threaten the very survival of the regime. North Korea's nuclear weapons, if they cannot be used as a means for eliciting more economic assistance from outside, the very legitimacy of Kim's rule will subject to people's doubt. The problem here is that Kim Jung Un, in the face of losing power, may consider carrying out an actual WMD attack, or threaten it in a very plausible way. In other cases, Kim Jung Un may think of starting an all out war against South Korea, in which escalation is inevitable leading to considering nuclear weapons for victory or favorable cease-fire.

Then, what will be the right course of deterrence for South Korea? It is no doubt that South Korea needs to maintain a sufficient level of deterrence based on extended deterrence with the help of the United States, and deterrence by denial.¹⁵ The situation of military standoff is quite exceptional thinking of post-Cold War transition in other parts of the world. Morgan devised the distinction between "general" and "immediate" deterrence. He also argued that today immediate deterrence was relatively rare because it assumes a very severe conflict and the need for imminent action.¹⁶ However, in the case of the Korean Peninsula, the need for immediate deterrence is not decreasing yet.

When two Koreas are sure of the other party's defensive intention, and focus on lessening security dilemma, mutual deterrence becomes easier and tends to be based on common, shared understanding about the concept and purpose of deterrence. Minimum deterrence prevails, rather than maximum deterrence, aiming at mutual destruction. Deterrence by punishment at the minimum level, which incurs the unacceptable harm, but not the maximum one threatening the very survival, is possible. Inter-Korean relationship with Kim Jong Il's North Korea could have a common, although slim, basis for mutual understanding. However, with Kim Jung Un in power whose purpose of military strategy is uncertain, and whose domestic political base seems also fragile, the appropriate level of deterrence is hard to establish.¹⁷

South Korea found the minimum deterrence insufficient, and tried to strengthen the extended deterrence based on the ROK-US alliance, and also started to build the mechanism of deterrence by denial. More than anything else, South Korea and the United States tried to ensure various mechanism of extended deterrence. The Joint Communique of the 46th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting, on October 23, 2014, emphasizes the continued U.S. commitment to provide and strengthen extended deterrence for the ROK using the full range of military capabilities, including the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities. It reads also to ensure that extended deterrence for the ROK remains credible, capable, and enduring, the Secretary and the Minister decided to periodically review the implementation progress of the bilateral "Tailored Deterrence Strategy Against North Korean Nuclear and Other WMD Threats." In addition, the Secretary and the Minister noted that the Tailored Deterrence Strategy TTX contributed to enhancing the Alliance's understanding of the Tailored Deterrence Strategy and to preparing political and military response procedures for various situations. The United States and the ROK are committed to maintaining close consultation on deterrence matters to achieve tailored deterrence against key North Korean threats and to maximize its deterrent effects.

In addition, two secretaries reaffirmed their commitment to reinforce the alliance's deterrence and response capabilities against North Korean missile threats through the establishment of "Concepts and Principles of ROK-U.S. Alliance Comprehensive Counter-missile Operations" to detect, defend, disrupt, and destroy missile threats including nuclear and biochemical warheads. They also reaffirmed

¹⁵ For an extensive arguments regarding extended deterrence in Asia, see Andrew. O'Neil, *Asia, the US and extended nuclear deterrence : Atomic Umbrellas in the Twenty-first Century*(New York : Routledge, 2013)

¹⁶ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, xvi.

¹⁷ There are other dilemmas for South Korea such as a credibility gap, a targeting dilemma, a stability-instability paradox. , see Geun Wook Lee, "Unholy Trinity in Nuclear Deterrence: Three Dilemmas of Nuclear Weapons," *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs* 12-2(2007), pp.5-18.

that the ROK will seek to develop by the mid-2020s its own Kill-Chain and Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) systems, which will be critical military capabilities for responding to the North Korean nuclear and missile threat as well as interoperable with Alliance systems. To this end, the Secretary and the Minister also decided to enhance information sharing on North Korean missile threats. The U.S. and the ROK are committed to maintaining close consultation to develop comprehensive Alliance capabilities to counter North Korean nuclear, other WMD, and ballistic missile threats.

Once South Korea decided to pursue deterrence by denial, it will be really hard to be sure of sufficient level of deterrence. South Korea developed the Kill Chain as a practical means of realizing the proactive deterrence strategy. In this strategy, surveillance, reconnaissance, and air-strike systems are key parts of the Kill Chain. But the Kill Chain is not designed to deter all of the North's missiles before they are launched. Then South Korea needs to improve the KAMD system to intercept any missiles launched against the South. These days South Korean military specialists and the public are conducting hot debates concerning the need to establish a multilayered missile defense system by focusing on the terminal phase and low-altitude defense, and plans to develop the KAMD into a more advanced, medium-altitude defense concept. South Korea is planning to secure PAC-3, M-SAM, L-SAM, etc., but the issue of using THAAD system is under serious controversy.

Recently North Koreans exposed their recent test fire of the SLBM. The problem for South Korea is that the KAMD is focused on the interception of land-based ballistic missiles launched from the land, but it is necessary not to deter threats from the seas surrounding the Korean Peninsula. It is predicted that North Korea may deploy SLBMs by the mid-2020s.¹⁸

Conventional threat from North Korea is also increasing. As was clearly manifested in the case of *Chonan* incident, it is an impending imperative for South Korea to design more active, and tailored deterrence strategy. In 2013, the United States and South Korea agreed to establish active deterrence against North Korea's military provocation with the idea that both nations to jointly respond to the North's local provocations, with the South taking the lead and the US in support. Two countries established the Combined Counter-Provocation Plan, which improved combined readiness posture to allow two nations to immediately and decisively respond to any North Korean provocation. Among the low-level incidents the deal is meant to deter are maritime border incursions, the shelling of border islands or infiltration of South Korean territory by low-flight fighter jets or special forces units.

2. Deterrence as a social construction

To move from this immediate deterrence position, it is an impending imperative to go for more general deterrence. Morgan writes that "general deterrence has to do with anticipating possible or potential threats, often hypothetical and from an unspecified attacker, and adopting a posture designed to deter other actors from ever beginning to think about launching an attack and becoming the "potential" or "would-be" challengers so prominent in deterrence theory."¹⁹ In the case of North Korea we know who is the challenger, but need to evolve from the war-like situation to more relaxed defense posture with general deterrence. Then, we deter North Korea from thinking about starting an attack and challenging the status quo.

Then, establishing the platform to share the understanding of the deterrence under the more overall framework of engaging with North Korea and is also necessary. Freeman argues; "deterrence works best when the targets are able to act rationally, and when the deterrer and the deterred are working within a sufficiently shared normative framework so that it is possible to inculcate a sense of appropriate behavior in defined situations that can be reinforced by a combination of social pressures and a sense of fair and effective punishment. Norms, therefore, do not develop and exist independently of assertions of power and interest."²⁰ "Norms play an important role in systems maintenance following the establishment of a deterrence relationship, in that stability depends not

¹⁸ Sang-min Lee, "South Korea's 'Proactive Deterrence' Strategy and Policy Suggestions to Develop the KAMD," Military Official Center for Security & Strategy, KIDA, October 24, 2014

¹⁹ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, xvi.

²⁰ Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence*(Cambridge: Polity Press 2004), p. 5

only on the fear of the consequences of an attempt to break out of the relationship but an understanding of what might be done to reassure the other that no attempt was being made and also to set the terms for being able to move beyond deterrence.”²¹

We need to send a clear signal to North Korea about its wrong doings. North Korean nuclear problem and rising level of tensions on the Peninsula are, no doubt, due to North Korea’s misconceived strategy and wrong decision. As is shown in the current phase, North Korea cannot achieve anything by its reckless actions of brinkmanship. On the contrary. Diplomatic isolation has deepened, and the commitment of both South Korean and the United States has increased.

However, the core of the North Korean problem is how to define its future strategic status with credible guarantee from outside powers. North Korea is the country under constant insecurity of being absorbed by the South, betrayed by China, and allegedly threatened by the United States. North Korea will not give up nuclear weapons unless it feels assured of its survivability. Both South Korea and the United States have constantly declared their intention to guarantee North Korea’s survival. However both lack of trust, incoherent policy coming from domestic considerations, and intransigent negotiation strategy prevented both parties to build trust.

North Korea will not be persuaded only by verbal guarantee or economic assistance short of political full support to give up nuclear weapons.²² At this stage strategic interaction should be complemented by more communicative interaction. Communicative action is about understanding the preferences of the other party, and delivering my preferences in a more credible form. It aims at “coming to understanding over the conditions of interaction rather than an orientation towards achieving immediate self-interest.”²³

IV. The strategy of engagement and the game of reassurance toward North Korea

Successful engagement with North Korea will weaken Kim Jung Un's excuse of developing nuclear weapons and military provocation against South Korea. North Korea has consistently insisted that the reason for nuclear development is to deter nuclear first-strike by the United States against their own territories. Also North Korean leadership the US North Korea strategy is ultimately the elimination of North Korean regime and reunification in the favor of South Korea. If engaging with the North turns out to be successful, North Korea may feel sure of the US and South Korea's intention for peaceful coexistence and gradual reunification.

Strategy of engagement is composed of several things. First, the party should reassure the target country that one is not threatening or antagonistic. Second, it should start the policy of reconciliation and peaceful exchange to invite the other to the cooperation game. In this process it is important for the engager to hedge against the possibility of the other's betrayal. Third, by gradually building trust, there will be structural bases to foster the change of the other's system and behavior.²⁴

All these process are not easy. Especially the first stage of reassuring the other of peaceful intention will affect the risk calculus of the target country to develop and use the military means including nuclear weapons. Then, as a part of engagement policy, the initial strategy of reassurance will work to send signals regarding one's benign intentions. In this process it is also possible for the sender to seek the receiver's intentions and purposes. Uncertainty about the other's cost-benefit calculus and strategic intention is a precondition to start the game of reassurance. Trust results only gradually after a serious of both successful and failing process of mutual reassurance.²⁵ One way of

²¹ Lawrence Freedman, “Deterrence: A reply,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28-5(2005),, p. 794

²² Other than verbal means, a state can deploy other types of reassurance attempts: non-military, and military deeds. Shiping Tang, *A Theory of Security Strategy For Our Time*(New York, Palgrave, 2010), p. 148

²³ Marc Lynch, “Why Engage?: China and the Logic of Communicative Engagement, *European Journal of International Relations*, 8-2(2002), p. 192.

²⁴ Tang, *A Theory of Security Strategy For Our Time*, p. 102

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130-136. Also Tang argues that “If extensive trust has to come before any reassurance signal, no reassurance is possible. This is simply because reassurance actually is driven by the desire to build trust and reduce mistrust, and building trust via reassurance fundamentally depends on taking some risk in the

reinforcing the credibility is to use publicity in communicative action. South Korea has endeavored to reassure North Korea of peaceful intention and lower the level of North Korea's nuclear development by eliminating the North's excuses for nuclear armament. South Korea tried to raise the audience cost and verifiability through public realm so that the signaling can be appreciated just more than a cheap talk. For the future this effort should go with military deterrence. In this process, South Korean dynamic democratic political process will help send signal to, and form preferences of North Korea.

To convince North Korea of genuine intention of South Korea and neighboring countries, more public debate and discourses about the future of North Korea needs to be augmented. South Korea should persuade North Korea to give up nuclear weapons and go for economic buildup with security guarantees which both South Korea and the international community are willing to provide.

If North Korea witnesses the increase of public debate upon its role and status in Northeast Asia, it may seek to conform to the expectation of international society, not because of its good intention, but because of the will to survive.²⁶ In this process, even a slight representation of the intention to absorb North Korea by any government will incite North Korea's worry leading to increasing mistrust toward outside powers.

V. Conclusion

Secretary of Defense Perry once noted that rogue regimes "may not buy into our deterrence theory. Indeed, they may be madder than MAD."²⁷ We have North Korea with young and unpredictable dictator at his formative period. North Korea declared itself as a nuclear state and has rejected any negotiation for denuclearization. There are ample grounds that Kim Jung Un is not rational in a traditional sense and North Korea becomes more and more "undeterrable." It is crucial at this moment to reinforce the posture of immediate deterrence. As North Korea develops much more destructive and diversified nuclear warheads, ICBMs with longer range, and the technology for SLBM, coping with these challenges with corresponding posture is essential.

However, in the game of deterrence and balance of terror, perception and subjective judgment loom large. For the deterrence to work, credibility and communication is as important as capability. With a young leader, it is very hard to predict the context-specific rationality of Kim Jung Un, and North Korea's cost-benefit calculus. Changes in North Korea's domestic political, economic, and ideational situation, inter-Korean relations, and even changing power shift in Northeast Asia will affect North Korea's calculation. To produce mutually stable concept of deterrence, there should be a gradual process of forging socially constructed regime of deterrence between two Koreas, and among major powers in the region.

As North Korea is both the threat to be deterred, and the partner for reunification, the combination of deterrence and engagement is also indispensable. There will be painful road to reassure North Korea of South Korea's peaceful intention, and transform a highly offensive game into a defensive one. Immediate deterrence should change into more general deterrence, and trust should be built in the various stages of reassurance.

possibility that the other side is untrustworthy." p. 140.

²⁶ James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes", *American Political Science Review* 88(1994), pp. 577-92; James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41(1997), pp. 68-90.

²⁷ Smith, *Deterring America*, p. 36