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Writing Samples

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Discussion of the Situation with North Korea

Most Americans have probably thought at least a little about North Korea over the past several months. After all, it is not pleasant to imagine that there could be nuclear missiles pointed at us. So, what is actually going on with North Korea, and how worried should people be? This essay will consider three main points. The first is the general history of North Korea, the second is President Trump's recent summit with the North Korean leader, and the third is the more general threat of living in a world that has nuclear weapons in it.

**About North Korea**

The collapse of North Korea has been predicted for a long time. This is because from the perspective of the Western world, it is difficult to believe that such a poor and isolated country with such a seemingly eccentric leader could continue to survive. And yet survive it has. As Rosen has put it: "It turns out that Kim Jong Un, the doughy ex-playboy and Disney enthusiast-turned hereditary neo-Stalinist overlord, is hardly as feckless or as cartoonish as he may appear" (paragraph 1). Kim has been quite effective at ensuring the survival of his own regime, within a context in which the bizarre ideology of North Korea proclaims that Kim is something close to a god.

In this context, Kim has relentlessly sought nuclear weapons in order to ensure the ongoing survival of his regime. He has probably been paying attention to recent American history in this regard. America toppled regimes in both Iraq and Libya, with the leaders of those countries having met with death. Watching this, it is likely that Kim thought that the only way to safeguard his own regime was to pursue nuclear weapons. He is perhaps not wrong about this. In fact, the mayhem that North Korea could wreak on its neighbors if it is provoked may well be the main reason that America has not engaged in military intervention against Kim's regime.

**The Recent Summit**

President Trump recently met with President Kim, and there has been some debate about the significance of this event. The most reasonable interpretation, though, is that it does not mean very much in terms of actual policy. As Dresnzer has commented: "There is no deal, just a bunch of super-vague promises. North Korea's pledge . . . is way weaker than what was initially promised and way weaker than the pledges it’s made in similar-looking documents over the past 25 years" (paragraph 5). There is no reason, in short, to believe that anything substantial has changed about North Korea's plans or general agenda. Kim almost certainly still want to obtain nuclear weapons.

Though, it is also worth noting that the summit reflected a general de-escalation of tension between America and North Korea. Before the summit, Trump and Kim where essentially engaged in name-calling and chest-thumping toward each other and bragging about destroy each other’s countries. While this was somewhat funny, it was also quite alarming, given the nature of the stakes at play. In this context, the fact that Trump and Kim actually sat down and talked with each other and came away from the meeting on decent terms bodes relatively well for at least the near future. It seems fairly clear that North Korea does not actually intend to send a nuclear missile at America, and that main reason that North Korea wants nuclear capability is for deterrence purposes (that is, preventing America from attempting to enact regime change).

**The General Threat**

So, while the summit did not necessarily change anything at the level of policy, it is still true that it was effective at the level of symbolism. The more general threat, though, may consist of the simple fact that we live in a world where nuclear weapons abound. Strictly at the level of odds, it is possible that something, someday, could go very wrong. As Robinson has pointed out: "I suppose it's easy to forget that all the warheads are lying there, ready to vaporize every city on earth in an instant. After all, you rarely see them. Sometimes it's hard to believe they even exist. They don't sit in your front garden waiting to be exploded" (paragraph 3). And yet all the nuclear weapons are clearly there, and probability suggests that at least one of them will fall into the wrong hands, sooner or later.

In this context, North Korea is a relatively *low* threat, in that Kim does not appear to have an irrational hatred of America per se. He sees to be primarily interested in the preservation of his regime, and he knows that if he attacks America, then his regime is over. But what if a nuclear weapon were to get into the hands of someone, such as an Islamic terrorist, who does not care about self-preservation but instead just wants to inflict a maximum of damage on America? Worrying about that would make more sense than worrying about North Korea.

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