

The North Korean Strategic Dilemma

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Outline

1. Kim Jong-un: a threat to regional stability
2. North Korea: catalyst for geopolitical change
3. US-Japan-ROK: strategic response
4. China: challenge to Xi's governance

Kim Jong-un

A Threat to Regional Stability

- Irrational?
 - assassination of his half-brother Kim Jong-nam
 - regime rationality: uncertain
- Dangerous
 - nuclear program
 - missile launches, particularly over Japan
 - artillery threat to South Korea
- Revisionist
 - rejects international law & rules-based order
 - rogue state (unlike Iran)



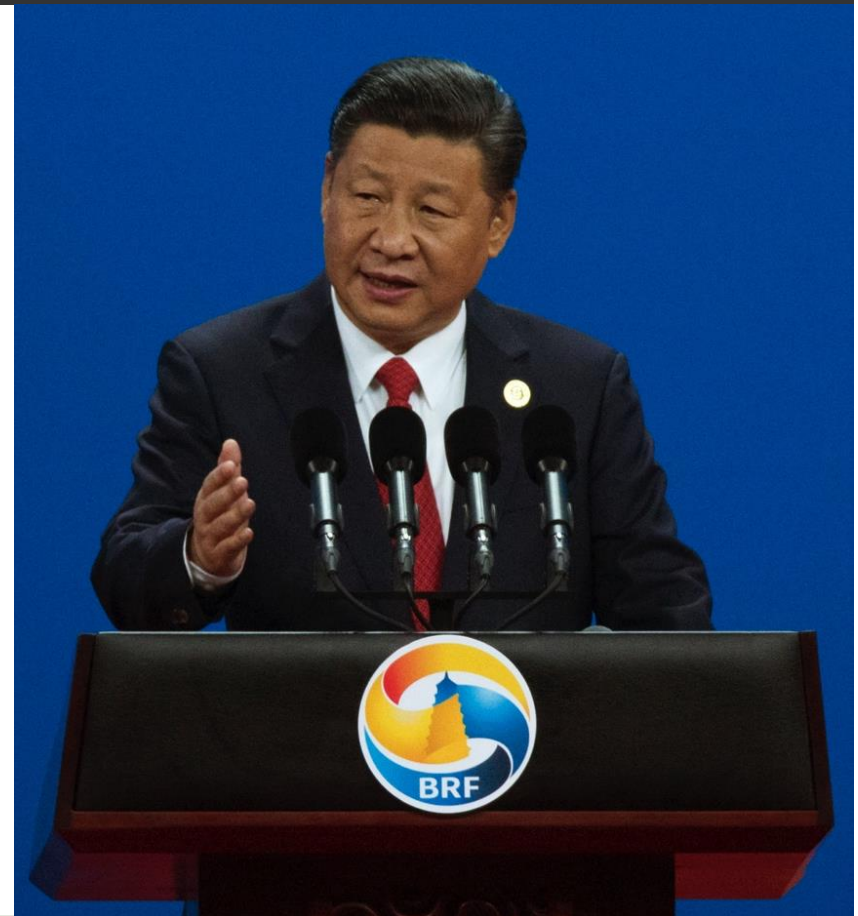
North Korea Catalyst for Geopolitical Change

- Japan
 - “Diamond Security” concept
 - Abe’s post-election mandate
- United States
 - preparation of diplomatic/military options
 - prepared to go to war if Guam or homeland attacked



North Korea Catalyst for Geopolitical Change

- China
 - Will not be the dominant power in Northeast Asia (militarily or economically)
 - North Korean crisis complicates Xi's regional ambitions
- Other powers
 - South Korea
 - Russia



US-Japan-ROK Strategic Response

- Enhanced cooperation
 - Trilateral agreement
 - Joint deployments
 - Missile defense
- Geopolitical challenge to China
 - US intention: compel Chinese cooperation on North Korea, not box it in
 - alternatively, does Beijing benefit?



China

Challenge to Xi's Governance

- Last 3 North Korean missile tests occurred during
 - April: Xi-Trump meeting in Mar-a-Lago, Florida
 - May: One Belt One Road Summit (Xi's keynote)
 - September: BRICS Summit in Xiamen
- Sino-Russian partnership
 - Interests don't converge for North Korea policy



The Strategic Dilemma

Looking Ahead

- The North Korean crisis is enabling the US and Japan to organize a new security architecture based on “Diamond Security”
 - Japan’s strategic role is changing → more important for regional and global stability
 - India cooperative, Australia possible
- China’s decision to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula could further alter geopolitical dynamics
 - Xi’s maritime and regional ambitions are complicated by the emerging security architecture
 - Beijing’s perception of “containment” → will China adopt Russian-style geopolitical paranoia about Diamond Security?