Leveraging System Dynamics with the North Korean Dilemma

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Abstract: Since its establishment as a nation-state in 1948, North Korea has destabilized the region and threatened global security. The country has proven time and time again that it will stop at nothing to achieve its goals of self-preservation and portraying itself as a strong and prosperous nation. The modern age provides diverse opportunities for North Korea to achieve its goals. Kim Jong-Un, the current supreme leader of North Korea, will continue to prevent the threat he perceives from the western world in order to continue his goals for the country. In this paper, the authors leverage system dynamics in order to describe the situation in North Korea and predict future action from the country. This approach provides options for dealing with the North Korean dilemma of today for policy makers and military planners alike, such as pressing China to cut ties with the North Korean government.

Keywords: System Dynamics, North Korea, Kim Jong-Un, Global Security

1. Introduction

1.1 Conflict in North Korea

Since its establishment as a state, North Korea has continued to remain in a vicious cycle of oppression and it remains a threat to global security. The problem that is North Korea began with the end of WWII in 1945. American troops were able to land and secure the southern part of Korea, while Soviet communist troops landed and secured north of the 38th parallel (Pruitt, 2013). The line itself, created by two young US military officers on August 14, 1945, should have been a temporary occupational zone line, but the emergence of the Cold War created significance to the infamous 38th parallel. Neither officers were experts on the history and geography of Korea, but using a National Geographic map, they only looked north of Seoul for a dividing line (Fry, 2013). Both the US and the USSR wanted control of their respective influences in Korea, and mistrust as well as the need for power prevented the two countries from deciding on a unified leader for Korea. The soviets selected Kim Il-Sung as the leader of the north, while the United Nations General Assembly, urged by the US, pushed for elections in the south along with a constitution and the inauguration of the Republic of Korea (Pruitt, 2013). The new leader of North Korea set up a “Concentrated Guidance Campaign” that was a massive ideological census to round up and execute citizens who did not believe in the communist North Korean government. Approximately 800,000 Koreans fled to the south, and Kim Il-Sung took shape as a “god” in the eyes of the North Koreans, causing many to leave as a result of not identifying the new leader as a deity (Sholte, 2014).

Kim Il-Sung became obsessed with reuniting the Koreas by force under the rule of communism. Aided with the help of Russia, North Korea prepared for war. The USSR provided many tanks for North Korea’s use (Peck, 2016). By 1950, Kim Il-Sung had doubled the army and artillery capabilities of North Korea, and he had a large advantage in aircraft and tanks compared to the South. On June 25, 1950, North Korea attacked the South and took Seoul in three days. The South, however, were members of the United Nations, and the UN Security Council voted to provide aid. Sixteen nations provided troops, the majority coming from the US (Sholte, 2014). The war started with defensive tactics, but within a few months President Truman and General Douglas MacArthur shifted to an offensive approach. They aimed to liberate from its communist roots. The allied forces pushed North Korea far north of the 38th parallel, but China intervened when US troops came too close to the Chinese