

# GETTING MESSAGES THROUGH: The cognition of influence with North Korea and East Asia

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Questions:

**What motivates key actors *and* what type of strategic confrontation do they face?**

Methods: - Insights from psychology and neuroscience to understand and influence behavior  
- Historical and contemporary cases, interviews and speeches.

Bottom lines:

***First, what drives the DPRK and key regional actors?***

- (a) Fear drives much regional behavior – mismatched fears between DPRK, ROK, US, Japan & China so no win-win.
- (b) Fairness: Rejection of perceived injustice fuels antagonism and instability.
- (c) Managing unpredictability is a central challenge for U.S. policymakers.

***Second, the U.S. must understand what type of conflict it faces – a “Grey Zone” conflict.***

- DPRK has conducted “Grey Zone” conflict for most of the past half century.
- Regional Grey Zone competition now between China, Japan and the ROK.

## “Checklist for empathy” method

Self-interest, Fairness, Fear, Identity, Status, Expectations, Opportunity & Capability

## DPRK decision-making: putting yourself in their shoes

### Insights into Kim Jong-un’s Cognition from his Public Speeches:

Particularly emphasizes: (a) DPRK capability/opportunity;  
(b) self-interest; and (c) national identity.

Rarely notes: (a) China; (b) foreign trade

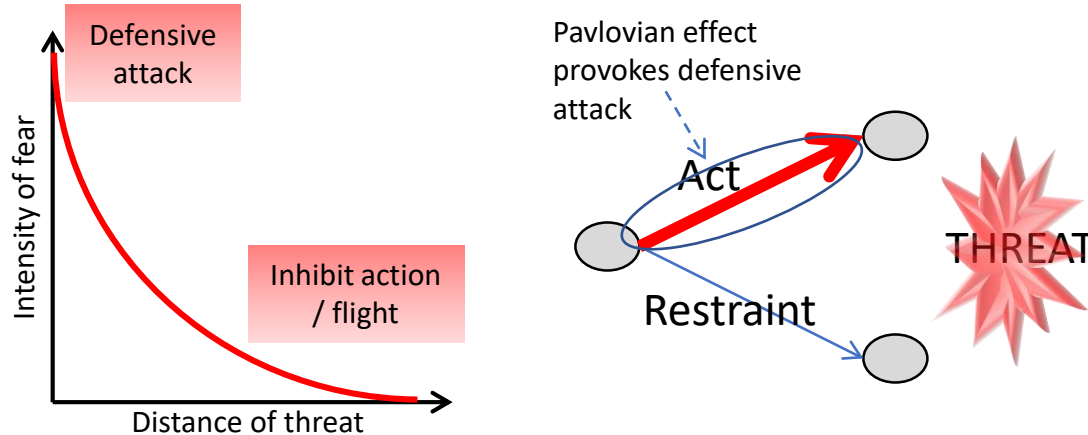
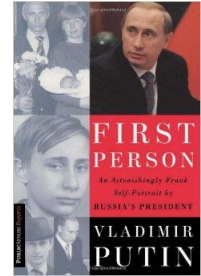
(Thanks to Larry Kuznar)

### Self-interest, capability and opportunity

Elite self-interest; state-level incentives not requiring trust

Growing up in a dilapidated Leningrad apartment building, Mr. Putin used to chase rats with sticks.

*“Once I spotted a huge rat and pursued it down the hall until I drove it into a corner,” he recounted. “It had nowhere to run. Suddenly it lashed around and threw itself at me. I was surprised and frightened. Now the rat was chasing me.”*



ANTICIPATE SEVERE DISCONTINUITIES IN BEHAVIOUR WITH PERSONAL DEATH THREATENED AND NO POSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE

**Fear of personal death** for KJU, his family & key others.

History of DPRK and ROK assassinations.

“Gaddafi” – lose ability to deter outside intervention

“Glasnost” – regime softening leads to collapse

“Ignorable” – non-nuclear DPRK cannot obtain aid

BUILD TRUST ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY

Prediction error

DPRK uses surprise as a tool.

US managing unpredictability with allies.

DPRK: cultural lenses and human commonalities

East Asian and Western individuals' decision-making (e.g. risk, losses or fairness) does not consistently differ – *we can rely on cognitive insights.*

East Asians do show greater context-dependence.

DPRK not the top Government priority of any regional power.

No “win-win.”

ROK and Japan – US extended influence and trust.

China – no longer “biding its time”.



### Recommendations

Mismatched fears - Only coordinated action on multiple fronts.

Regarding Japan and the ROK:

Pursue a multifaceted strategy to build trust and credibility. I make six recommendations.

Help mitigate Sino-Japanese fairness dilemma, via a “one step back, three steps forward” strategy.

Regarding China: Trade; THAAD.



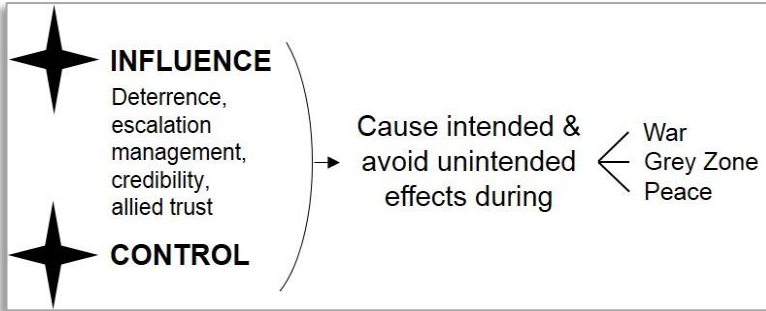
**TOTAL WAR**

**LIMITED WAR**

Crises	Many smaller actions	Single/few large actions	<b>GREY ZONE</b>
Crises	"Normal" competition (e.g. economic competition, espionage)		<b>PEACE</b>

# North Korea as a Grey Zone challenge

Grey Zone conflict is necessarily *limited* conflict, and thus the central aim is to *influence* the decision-making of adversaries and other key audiences – success requires policymakers understand and wield influence.



Apply the science of influence.

Five multiples of the Grey Zone

New lens to manage this devilishly difficult DPRK confrontation and its regional ramifications

Multiple levels (e.g. state, non-state actor, population)

Multiple instruments of power (e.g. assassinations)

Multiple timeframes (e.g. crises, cumulative actions, norms)

Multiple audiences (e.g. allies, neutrals)

Multiple interpretations (ambiguity is a tool)