

**Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark. "Nuclear Beliefs: A Leader-Focused Theory of Counter-Proliferation."** *Security Studies* 26:4 (2017): 545-574. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1331628>.

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In "Nuclear Beliefs: A Leader-Focused Theory of Counter-Proliferation," Rachel Whitlark advances a new framework to explain why military force is rarely employed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. According to power transition theory, a nuclear weapons program should spark an intense security dilemma with a high risk of war as other nations consider using force to forestall an adverse shift in the balance of power.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to this conventional wisdom, Whitlark demonstrates that even a looming proliferation threat does not pressure all leaders to "think and act similarly" by mulling over preventive war (550). Instead, the article shows that presidents and prime ministers come into political office with prior beliefs about the consequences of proliferation and stability of nuclear deterrence. For some leaders, a sanguine judgement about the ability to manage nuclear-armed adversaries becomes an anchor against even deliberating coercive counter-proliferation strategies. Whitlark marshals archival evidence to show how President John F. Kennedy's entrenched pessimism about proliferation led him to consider a range of military options against China's emerging nuclear program. In stark contrast, President Lyndon B. Johnson's

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<sup>1</sup> The preventive motivation for war arises when an adversary believes its power and capability are in decline relative to a rising defender, and fears the future consequences of this transition; see Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War," *World Politics* 40:1 (October 1987): 87. In bargaining terms, "if B's expected decline in military power is too large relative to B's costs for war, then state A's inability to commit to restrain its foreign policy demands after it gains power makes preventive attack rational for state B," see James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49:3 (July 1995): 406. On how nuclear weapons programs can create strong preventive war motivations that leave the proliferant with less security, see Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, "Nuclear Weapons Programs and the Security Dilemma," in Matthew Fuhrmann and Adam Stulberg, eds., *The Nuclear Renaissance and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 265-287.

optimism seemed to result in these same options being taken off the table on the eve of the first Chinese nuclear weapons test.

The article makes a major contribution to the study of nuclear proliferation and preventive war by identifying the conditions under which military options are unlikely to be considered by executive decision-makers. The leader-focused theory draws upon the groundbreaking work of Elizabeth Saunders on the role that individual leaders play in the formulation and execution of national security strategy.<sup>2</sup> Whitlark deftly imports Saunders' framework into the nuclear proliferation arena, and backs this modified theory with a rigorous research design. Although a few historical anomalies stand out in the case study of President Johnson, the article crafts a compelling empirical narrative from a trove of archival sources. By bringing leaders' beliefs into focus, Whitlark unpacks a critical variable in the causal chain of counter-proliferation policy. Moreover, the article cues up several avenues for further research, and sheds light on how President Donald Trump might be thinking through preventive war options on the Korean peninsula.

How often do leaders come into political office with beliefs that prime them to look past coercive counter-proliferation? Whitlark provides a powerful but partial answer to this question. At the outset, the article usefully breaks down the counter-proliferation process into two sequential stages: (1) consideration and (2) use of force. To be sure, Whitlark advances a complete logic to explain how beliefs "act as the lens through which a leader determines the inputs into his or her cost benefit calculation" at each stage (552). But the main emphasis of the article is on the initial consideration of military force, defined as an observable decision by the executive leader to "engage some portion of the national security apparatus as well as request feasibility studies to assess the practicality of conducting the campaign" (548). In Table 1, the article codes a handful of U.S. presidents (Harry Truman, Johnson, Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush) as having not considered military options against clear proliferation threats (Soviet Union, China, Pakistan, North Korea, and Syria, respectively). As Whitlark notes, this pattern of behavior cuts against the grain of power transition logic, which stipulates that these leaders should have at least considered coercive means to inhibit the spread of nuclear weapons. The article aptly narrows the analytic aperture to focus on explaining this trend.

The crux of Whitlark's leader-focused theory is that two conditions must come together for an executive decision-maker to take military options off the menu at the outset of a crisis: proliferation optimism and proliferant deterrability. On the first condition, the article makes the case that leaders come into office with preformed beliefs about the consequences of proliferation. At one end of the spectrum are the proliferation pessimists who believe that the spread of nuclear weapons portends dire consequences for international security. Kennedy, for instance, had long expressed concerns about "the catastrophic dangers of new nuclear arsenals, the risks of accidental use, and worried about a nuclear cascade as newly nuclear states inspired others' proliferation" (560). Whitlark traces Kennedy's early views on proliferation to show that he carried this profound pessimism with him to the presidency. As a result, Kennedy was primed to consider military

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Elizabeth N. Saunders, "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy," *International Security* 34:4 (Fall 2009): 119-161.

options against China's nuclear program, especially since he believed that deterrence against a nuclear-armed Chairman Mao Zedong was a fool's errand.<sup>3</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, proliferation optimists hold an opposing set of beliefs about the spread of nuclear weapons. Quite simply, they “expect war to be less likely with additional states in the international system acquiring nuclear weapons ... because the extreme costs of nuclear war ... induce caution among all parties” (553). In other words, optimists believe that “the overwhelming power of nuclear deterrence ... brings the possibility of war between nuclear-armed states close to zero.”<sup>4</sup> This logic is often associated with the late international relations theorist Kenneth Waltz,<sup>5</sup> but Whitlark argues that some government leaders ascribe to a similar set of beliefs. This is a surprising result. Whitlark contends that Johnson, for example, was a “weak optimist” because he believed “in the deterrent power of nuclear weapons” and “a lower likelihood of nuclear war” (565).

In retrospect, Johnson's optimism is hard to square with the weight he threw behind efforts to inhibit proliferation; surely the leader who oversaw the genesis of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must have been a staunch pessimist. But Whitlark contends that at the sudden outset of Johnson's ascendancy to the White House, the new President held “rather unsophisticated views of international affairs,” which limited his “perception of the negative consequences of proliferation for American security” (564, 565). When confronted with the Chinese nuclear threat at the outset of his term, Johnson was therefore “insufficiently threatened to pay the costs associated with military prevention” (565). Whitlark shows that a diluted form of proliferation optimism led Johnson to downplay the threat posed by China's nuclear program, even though he ended up championing global nonproliferation initiatives later on.

A few other rough edges need to be sanded off of the Johnson case, however, in order for it to provide definitive evidence that the President did not consider the use of force against China. Soon after Johnson assumed the presidency, he was presented with a portfolio of recently finished policy plans and intelligence assessments on the Chinese proliferation threat, including “options for forestalling the [Chinese] program” (570). Kennedy had ordered these reports be drawn up before his assassination. By cuing up feasibility studies into military prevention, he essentially obviated the need for Johnson to take active consideration steps himself to spin up the US national security apparatus.

Whitlark goes on to land a strong evidentiary punch by showing that Johnson decided to stand down in the face of an imminent Chinese nuclear test. But this leaves open space for an alternative narrative wherein Johnson reviewed the preventive options ordered by Kennedy but determined it was too late to forestall China's inevitable acquisition of nuclear weapons. Indeed, Whitlark demonstrates that Johnson seemed much

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<sup>3</sup> See also William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960–64,” *International Security* 25:3 (2001): 54-99, <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228800560525>.

<sup>4</sup> Francis J. Gavin, “Politics, History and the Ivory Tower-Policy Gap in the Nuclear Proliferation Debate,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35:4 (2012): 574, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2012.715736>.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Kenneth N. Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” *The American Political Science Review* 84:3 (September 1990): 731-745; Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012).

more focused on the development trajectory of China's strategic delivery systems (571), and implies that the President did not consider or pursue any options to slow down the Chinese missile program. Concrete evidence that Johnson opted out of considering military force or even sabotage against the missile program would have delivered a second knockout punch.

President Johnson's commission of the Gilpatric Committee in the wake of China's nuclear test is most problematic because the group did explore military prevention and covert action. Johnson tasked this group of external advisors with exploring "the widest range of measures that the United States might undertake in conjunction with other governments or by itself" to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.<sup>6</sup> The Committee presented the president with a range of options, including the "use military force to eliminate China's nuclear capability," and even covert operations to sabotage nuclear programs in allied countries.<sup>7</sup> Whitlark argues that the Gilpatric Committee's report should be viewed as part of a broader effort "to determine what role, if any, non-proliferation should play in US foreign policy" (565). Since the group consisted of non-governmental advisors, neither its mandate nor the ultimate policy plan count as active consideration of military options as defined by Whitlark at the outset of the article.

Some of these issues could be remedied by comparing Johnson's (in)actions with other proliferation optimists who the article codes as not considering preventive war against nuclear programs. The main shortcoming of an article length treatment of this important issue is the lack of space to detail how many U.S. presidents (or other foreign leaders) came into office as deep-seated proliferation optimists. This gap could be readily filled in a longer manuscript, but is still notable for three reasons. First, in Whitlark's model, proliferation optimism appears to be a necessary condition for a leader not to consider preventive war. Yet the aforementioned Table 1 in the article does not code any of the U.S. presidents as either optimists or pessimists. So aside from the case studies on Kennedy and Johnson, it is difficult to know whether Truman, Carter, Bush 41, and especially Bush 43 satisfy what appears to be an essential necessary condition for taking force off the table.

Second, proliferation optimism is an uncommon belief for leaders to hold. During the Cold War, many U.S. policymakers held "relativist" positions in between binary optimism and pessimism. As Austin Long argues, these relativists believed the consequences of proliferation depended on geopolitical context and "the domestic characteristics of states."<sup>8</sup> After the Cold War, pessimism became accepted dogma, making it "hard to find a serving or former U.S. national security official ... who would champion the idea that nuclear proliferation was anything but deeply dangerous, destabilizing, and inimical to American interests."<sup>9</sup> The prevalence of proliferation pessimism and relativism in American strategic thought undercuts the case that optimistic beliefs explain the rarity of preventive war.

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<sup>6</sup> Francis J. Gavin, "Blasts from the Past: Proliferation Lessons from the 1960s," *International Security* 29:3 (Winter 2005): 108, <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288043467504>.

<sup>7</sup> Gavin, "Blasts from the Past," 110.

<sup>8</sup> Austin Long, "Proliferation and Strategic Stability in the Middle East," in Elbridge A. Colby and Michael S. Gerson, eds., *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations* (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 386.

<sup>9</sup> Gavin, "Politics, History and the Ivory Tower-Policy Gap," 573.

In an indicative example, the article codes President George H. W. Bush as a case of “no consideration” of preventive military options against North Korea’s nascent nuclear program from 1989 to 1992 (Table 1, 549). A recently released batch of archival documents from the National Security Archive confirms that senior officials in the Bush administration did indeed insist that “the use of force should not be on the table” to deal with North Korea, “since merely discussing the possibility could put their initial diplomatic strategy in jeopardy.”<sup>10</sup> The glaring anomaly for the leader-focused theory of counter-proliferation is that many of these same officials held infamously strong pessimistic views about nuclear proliferation, most notably Vice President Richard Cheney and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz.<sup>11</sup> To iron out this wrinkle, additional research could trace how this coterie impacted President Bush’s ultimate decision to forgo consideration of military measures against North Korea in the early 1990s.

Third, Whitlark’s model stipulates optimism as necessary but not sufficient for negating preventive options at the consideration stage. In addition to being an optimist, the leader must also make a “subjective assessment of the adversary and how they are likely to act once nuclear” (555). If the proliferant is deemed “to be expansionist, committed to world or regional dominance, and difficult to deter,” then even a staunch optimist is likely to review military options to counter “a critical threat to national security” (554, 555). However, if the nuclear aspirant is perceived “as security seeking and more likely to be deterred,” the optimist is unlikely to consider preventive action at all (554). In sum, Whitlark’s logic stipulates that preventive war is *only* taken off the table when a leader is (A) optimistic about the general consequences of proliferation *and* (B) confident in the ability to deter the proliferant down the road.

To be clear, the article should be commended for identifying two factors that cause some leaders not to contemplate military intervention. Yet the critical lingering question is whether these conditions occur with relative frequency throughout the atomic era, thereby accounting for the rarity of preventive war against nuclear programs. If Whitlark’s model can be validated beyond the Johnson case, then it would rebut Francis Gavin’s claim that the “American temptation to use force to limit nuclear spread has been a persistent feature of nuclear non-proliferation policy, regardless of administration, party affiliation, or structure of the international system.”<sup>12</sup> Instead, the leader-centric theory of counter-proliferation would reinforce Marc Trachtenberg’s conclusion that “a tendency to think in preventive war terms is not quite built into the basic structure of the system. People are instead drawn to the type of thinking only when a certain political judgment is made about the nature and manageability of the conflict at hand.”<sup>13</sup> Whitlark’s article therefore lays down a solid foundation to explore how often and why some leaders end up making the judgement to put aside military prevention.

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<sup>10</sup> Malcolm Byrne, “What Would Cheney Advise Trump on North Korea?,” *UNREDACTED* (blog), 8 November 2017, <https://unredacted.com/2017/11/08/what-would-cheney-advise-trump-on-north-korea/>

<sup>11</sup> For a first-rate historical examination of Wolfowitz’s early beliefs about nuclear proliferation, see David Milne, *Worldmaking: The Art and Science of American Diplomacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Gavin, “Politics, History and the Ivory Tower-Policy Gap,” 587.

<sup>13</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, “Preventive War and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Security Studies* 16:1 (2007): 29-30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410701304523>.

This type of deep dive into the practice of counter-proliferation policy across time and space could also explore how leaders' nuclear beliefs interact with major changes to the international system. In the article, Whitlark's research design makes deft use of the Kennedy and Johnson comparison to hold most other variables constant. With the plausibility of the model demonstrated, additional research could consider the impact of systemic change - notably the collapse of the Soviet Union and attendant shifts in the U.S. alliance architecture - on leaders' beliefs toward proliferation. As a number of scholars have argued, there certainly seem to be several links between the American unipolar moment and a tendency by presidents to at least think through the feasibility of using military force as an instrument of counter-proliferation.<sup>14</sup> For instance, if a leader knows from the start of a crisis that the nuclear aspirant is not under the protection of a superpower patron, how does this prior knowledge shape the consideration calculus?

The menu of coercive options available to leaders has also expanded over the last seven decades to include new means for detecting and disrupting nuclear programs. The modern battle for countering proliferation seems to be increasingly waged on trade routes, financial accounts, and computer networks.<sup>15</sup> If leaders are quick to reach for targeted economic sanctions or cyber-enabled covert operations, then perhaps the consideration stage is a bit more complex today than it was during Kennedy's tenure.

On a related note, the cat-and-mouse game between proliferator and counter-proliferator has also undergone several major evolutions since the first wave of nuclear weapons acquisition crested in the 1960s. In contrast to the classic Chinese or Soviet approach of 'sprinting' towards a nuclear test, subsequent generations of nuclear aspirants pursued alternative technical development pathways and proliferation strategies designed to acquire all the pieces for a weapons capability while lowering the risks and costs of preventive military action.<sup>16</sup> Whitlark is in a prime position to explore whether leaders believe that the spread of this so-called nuclear latency portends negative or positive consequences for international security.<sup>17</sup> Since countries can

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<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security* 36:3 (2011): 9-40; T.V. Paul, "Disarmament Revisited: Is Nuclear Abolition Possible?," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35:1 (2012): 149-169, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2012.645369>; Harald Müller and Mitchell Reiss, "Counterproliferation: Putting New Wine in Old Bottles," *The Washington Quarterly* 18:2 (1995): 143-154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636609509550151>.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Jon R. Lindsay, "Stuxnet and the Limits of Cyber Warfare," *Security Studies* 22:3 (2013): 365-404; Thomas Rid, "Cyber War Will Not Take Place," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35:1 (2012): 5-32; Uri Sadot, "Osirak and the Counter-Proliferation Puzzle," *Security Studies* 25:4 (2016): 646-676; Juan Zarate, *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Robert J. Einhorn, "Identifying Nuclear Aspirants and Their Pathways to the Bomb," *The Nonproliferation Review* 13:3 (2006): 491-499, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700601071546>; Vipin Narang, "Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb," *International Security* 41:3 (2017): 110-150, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00268](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00268); Daniel Altman and Nicholas L. Miller, "Red Lines in Nuclear Nonproliferation," *Nonproliferation Review* (forthcoming).

<sup>17</sup> Rupal N. Mehta and Rachel E. Whitlark, "The Benefits and Burdens of Nuclear Latency," *International Studies Quarterly* 61:3 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx028>; see also Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Latency and Nuclear Proliferation," in William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, eds., *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Volume 1, The Role of Theory* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2010): 81; Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach, "Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency Dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*



leverage nuclear latency to hedge against the future or even to reap immediate deterrent and compellent benefits,<sup>18</sup> it would be useful to employ the leader-focused theory to tease out when and why proliferation pessimists might forgo the consideration of military force against latent nuclear programs.

Finally, Whitlark's leader-centric theory of counter-proliferation provides a useful analytic lens for clarifying the current nuclear crisis between the United States and North Korea, albeit with troubling implications for the likelihood of preventive war on the Korean peninsula. Much ink has been spilled on assessing the various options to halt or roll-back North Korea's acquisition of nuclear tipped long-range ballistic missiles. Others have attempted to divine President Trump's intentions or detect elements of continuity and change in his administration's approach to managing the North Korean nuclear problem. An excellent article from Jeffrey Michaels and Heather Williams even looks back on the entire track record of Trump's statements to determine whether he formulated consistent beliefs on nuclear weapons before running for office.<sup>19</sup> Whitlark's model suggests that we may be able to peer into the preventive calculus of the administration by subjecting the data from Michaels and Williams to three lines of inquiry.

First, is Trump a proliferation pessimist or an optimist? During the presidential campaign, Trump's views on proliferation and nuclear weapons were notoriously vague, contradictory, or anathema to most U.S. national security experts. Earlier in life, however, Trump seems to have cultivated a strong and consistent pessimism about the consequences of global nuclear proliferation. He began to worry about the threat as a child when his uncle, "MIT professor John Trump, told him about the power of nuclear weapons and the potential for their miniaturization."<sup>20</sup> As an adult during the Cold War, Trump fantasized about "becoming US negotiator on nuclear arms limitations talks with the Soviets." In one episode seemingly lifted from a rejected script for *Wall Street*, Trump was observed taking a series of calls on the "car phone" in his limousine, and "talking nonstop about the threat of nuclear war."<sup>21</sup> He also believed that "the NPT was not working" and wanted to cut a new deal between the United States and Soviet Union "to prevent other nations from obtaining a nuclear capability by whatever means necessary." In stark contrast to his views on the 2016 campaign trail, Trump believed that even US allies such as France should "be forced to give up their nuclear arsenal or face

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32:4 (2015): 443-461. For the classic works on nuclear latency, see George H. Quester, "Some Conceptual Problems in Nuclear Proliferation," *American Political Science Review* 66:2 (1972): 490-497; Albert J. Wholstetter, *Swords from Plowshares: The Military Potential of Civilian Nuclear Energy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> On the integration of nuclear latency into strategies of coercive diplomacy, see Tristan A. Volpe, "Atomic Leverage: Compellence with Nuclear Latency," *Security Studies* 26:3 (2017): 517-544, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1306398>; Matthew Fuhrmann, "The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester: Social Science Research Network, 8 September 2017), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3052231>.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Michaels and Heather Williams, "The Nuclear Education of Donald J. Trump," *Contemporary Security Policy* 38:1 (2 January 2017): 54-77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1291206>.

<sup>20</sup> Michaels and Williams, 59.

<sup>21</sup> Lois Romano for *The Washington Post* quoted in Michaels and Williams, 59.

economic sanctions.”<sup>22</sup> In sum, the evidence compiled by Michaels and Williams suggests that Trump was a proliferation pessimist for most of his life prior to the presidential campaign.

Second, does Trump believe countries such as North Korea can be deterred? The record compiled by Michaels and Williams is mixed but leans toward a negative assessment. After the Cold War, Trump often questioned the rationality of the Kim regime. In a political manifesto from 2000, he referred to North Korea as “an outlaw, terrorist state run by a family of certifiable loons,” and claimed that “negotiation with these madmen will be fruitless once they have the ability to lob a nuclear missile into Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York.” Trump also doubted the efficacy of the US nuclear arsenal to deter these threats. But at the same time, he claimed that the North Korean leadership would not “destroy” itself by launching a “traceable missile against the United States.” Instead, Trump worried that North Korea would invest in alternative low tech means of delivering an ‘untraceable’ warhead to U.S. soil, such as “a van, or a suitcase, or a fire-hydrant-sized canister” (he did not consider the difficulties associated with foiling post-detonation nuclear forensics).<sup>23</sup>

Third, how might these beliefs shape Trump’s belief about the likelihood of successful intervention against North Korea? This question is difficult to answer without comparative data from Whitlark about how Trump’s beliefs stack up next to his predecessors who dealt with the North Korean nuclear problem as well. On initial consideration, Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all seemed to be strong proliferation pessimists. Several gave serious consideration to employing preventive military options on the Korean peninsula; reports even surfaced in 2017 of an alleged effort to sabotage North Korean missiles.<sup>24</sup> Again, a complete coding of how successive administrations weighed confidence in the ability of the United States to deter North Korea or forestall its nuclear trajectory could help us estimate whether Trump is relatively more cost and risk acceptant, or cut from similar cloth when it comes to facing the realities of prevention against a hard target.

Taken together, these three elements suggest that preventive military options are very likely to be under active consideration by the Trump administration, and not just part of a rhetorical gambit to ratchet up pressure on North Korea. In an apparent confirmation of this proposition, several members of Congress requested information from the Pentagon about the impact of a conflict with North Korea. The response from the Pentagon in early November 2017 noted that a ground invasion would be required to locate and destroy the entire North Korean nuclear weapons program, thereby indicating that feasibility studies were underway.<sup>25</sup> Whitlark’s model does highlight one potential off-ramp from consideration: even staunch pessimists are likely to opt out of using military force if they are confident that the adversary can be deterred. If Trump comes believe in the possibility of a stable deterrence relationship with North Korea, perhaps through a more

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<sup>22</sup> Michaels and Williams, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Trump and Dave Shiftlett, as quoted in Michaels and Williams, 60.

<sup>24</sup> David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “Trump Inherits a Secret Cyberwar against North Korean Missiles,” *New York Times*, 4 March 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2lHyFle>.

<sup>25</sup> Dan Lamothe and Carol Morello, “Securing North Korean Nuclear Sites Would Require a Ground Invasion, Pentagon Says,” *Washington Post*, 4 November 2017, <http://wapo.st/2zlrauJ>.



detailed understanding of U.S. power projection capabilities and strategic forces, then the specter of preventive war should in turn recede.

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