Writers in this Issue

On North Korea

Zachary Blumenkehl '13 In his brief article, Blumenkehl discusses a topic more complex than it seems: North Korea’s relationship with the rest of the world. Despite North Korea’s perceived weakness, it continues to act with aggression (particularly toward those who offer assistance). Such actions, Zach argues, will only lead to North Korea’s undoing. As North Korea pushes forward, it will drive away China, and therefore render itself a non-threat.

Michael Cuppari '14 Cuppari analyzes the options of the United States as it moves forward. Using historical examples, Cuppari finds that there is only one course of action for the United States: it should respond to North Korean aggression with aggression. Just as Bill Clinton did successfully during his presidency, Obama needs to respond to North Korea with force, and seek out a “negotiated settlement” afterwards.

Derrick Yao '15 Yao focuses on the relationship that exists between North Korea and China. Historically, China has been one of North Korea’s biggest allies and supporters (some might argue that China’s aid has even helped North Korea reach its nuclear capabilities). However, China has recently expressed its disapproval of North Korea’s actions, and has even moved forward by cooperating with sanctions passed by the United Nations.

Alex Zhang '15 In his article, Zhang presents North Korea’s actual capacity to inflict harm against the common person. Citing a variety of specific examples, Zhang concludes that, in actuality, North Korea poses no real threat. Most of its technology is either outdated or unable to reach United States soil, while its actual military palls in comparison to that of the United States.

Etcetera

Ryan Teehan '14 In his latest philosophical rant, Teehan delves into nationalism: a topic that has existed in the world for centuries. If historical events can teach us anything, it is pretty clear that every country’s constant competition only serves to degrade the lives of every person. The only remedy is superficially simple: reject nationalism by fostering a new, larger sense of international cooperation and union.

Jack Lynch '14 In the wake of the recent bombings at the Boston Marathon, Lynch focuses on the method of punishing Dzhokhar Tarnaev. Bringing up the points of view typical of this sort of issue, Lynch calls for a change to the norm of a harsh response to terrorism. Fighting violence with more violence, as Lynch argues, never sends the right message to terrorists worldwide. Instead, the United States should focus on a fair trial and imprisonment.

Kabbas Azhar '13 Related in its own way to the topic of North Korea, Kabbas’ article delves into a broader point of view. Kabbas explains that, in the modern era, the world needs to recognize the humanity that exists in all people, no matter how evil their leaders are. Humans generally tend to marginalize each other as a part of their natural limitations, and the only solution seems to be a sense of empathy.

Matthew Chuckran '13 Given the relatively recent movement on the Affordable Care Act, the whole concept of health insurance mandates seems pertinent. By citing a plethora of sources, both scientific and political, Chuckran sets out a solid argument for why health insurance mandates make sense, particularly in the United States. Logically, Chuckran makes a simple conclusion: health insurance mandates will only benefit the American people.
Letter from the Editors
We editors here at The Forum would like to thank all of our faculty and student support over the past year. This issue will be the last of the school year, and it is a good one. This month, our writers chiefly investigate North Korea and the effect it has on the United States. Is the communist nation a true threat? What does a shift in power among the top ranks of the authoritative government mean? Where can I know all of this information? The answer is right here, in Volume 4.

When we conceived the idea of The Forum way back in 2012, we had always imagined an interesting, well put together, and aesthetically pleasing magazine for all the school to read. Well, it looks like we did it. This is that magazine. We have reached the summit! We have crossed the river! We have reached a new frontier in the art of school publishing! But we could not have done it without the help of others. From the constructive criticisms of readers all the way up to the help of our teacher supervisor, Mr. Conn, and our senior editors, Kabbas Azhar and Nishwant Swami, what you hold is a testament to the hard work of many. In fact, you might even notice some stylistic changes in this issue, like wider margins and a symbol to indicate the end of an article.

But, alas, all things pass—and so too must our time as head honchos over here at The Forum. That’s why we’re not unhappy passing the torch to Ryan Teehan and Jack Lynch, our new Editors-in-Chief for 2013-2014. That’s right, they’re the new editors. Ryan and Jack, you better not mess up all we have done.

Farewell, Delbarton.
— Matthew “The Wizard” Chuckran and Conor “[redacted]” Ryan
Editors-in-Chief

North Korea: No Small Feat

In recent news, North Korea’s nuclear threat has raised alarm. According to the U.S. military, “The moment of explosion is approaching fast. No one can say a war will break out in Korea or not and whether it will break out today or tomorrow.” Oh, the horror.

South Korean citizen Choi Chang-ho sums up the South Korean view of North Korea with his nonchalant humor: “I am bored with them.”

North Korea has managed to pick fights with many countries and the Disney Corporation—yes, even the Disney Corporation—and still the US news has been talking about North Korea as a “threat.” However, when you look at North Korea as a whole, it is hard to image the country as an scary treat.

Throughout the years, North Korea has been plagued with famines and relies on other countries’ help. The World Food Program estimates that “6 million of North Korea’s 25 million people are in need of food aid and one-third of children are chronically malnourished or stunted.” In the year 2006 alone, South Korea donated an estimate 500,000 tons of food. Despite this fact, North Korea has the audacity to make threats to the country.

One of the U.S.’s biggest hurdles in dealing with North Korea is China; but recently, “The United States and China committed Saturday to a process aimed at ridding North Korea of its nuclear weapons, with the Obama administration gaining at least the rhetorical support of the only government that can exert significant influence over the reclusive North.” Without China’s support, North Korea is not a threat.
Calling their Bluff: The U.S.’s Reaction to North Korean Threats

M I C H A E L  C U P P A R I

After several alarming threats from North Korea, the United States now faces the prospect of a nuclear calamity and a costly war in Northeast Asia. While Secretary of State Chuck Hagel recently called this possibility “real and dangerous,” I believe that North Korea’s threats are diplomatic bluster used solely to coerce the United States into loosening stringent sanctions. As such, I agree with the current administration’s course of action: shifting strategic defense systems into Asia in order to pressure the regime into submission. I think, however, that this is only an ephemeral solution that masks, rather than solves, the problems inducing the North toward military aggression; most notably, a lack of economic prosperity and a deep-seated sense of isolation. Ultimately, these problems are complex geo-political issues that can only be resolved through bilateral talks and a concerted, international effort to provide monetary aid to North Korea.

At the moment, putting military pressure on North Korea is the only effective way to dissuade its leaders from an attack on the South or a nuclear strike. As Michael Green of the CATO Institute notes, “The focus on deterring North Korea and punishing them for violations, and constraining their ability to move their nuclear program forward or proliferate has been historically effective and is the ideal strategy to deal with the North.” In fact, using military intimidation has succeeded in diffusing tensions in past crises with North Korea. Bill Clinton, for instance, successfully employed this tactic in the mid 1990’s as leverage to combat North Korea’s nuclear threats. Surprised by this show of strength, Kim Jong-Il, then Supreme leader, was forced to sign the 1994 Agreed Framework concord that halted the regime’s nuclear program. Just like Clinton, the current administration must continue to place heavy military pressure on the North Koreans to bring them back to the bargaining table, where the United States, China, and other world powers can arrange a permanent solution to this imbroglio.

If military pressure is the means, a negotiated settlement with North Korea must work to alleviate the economic distress and widespread poverty that its citizens contend with every day. In doing so, the North’s motivation for pursuing brinkmanship to extort aid from other nations would be immediately removed. Likewise, North Korea’s hostile regime, which depends on anti-western sentiment for support, would be discredited, encouraging the growth of nascent democratic movements within the country. Ultimately, a negotiated settlement that disarms the North and provides aid to its economy is the only solution capable of permanently stabilizing the Korean peninsula.
Cosmopolitanism: Towards International Justice and an End to Hypocrisy

Ryan Teehan

A man ran into a crowded square and said, “Where is Nationalism? Where is its altar upon which we have sacrificed countless men, women, and children? Where can I find it?” “I will tell you. We have killed it, all of us. We are all gravediggers who are burying Nationalism. But where is its altar upon which we have sacrificed countless men, and children? Where is its altar upon which we have killed it?”

In many ways, nationalism has been the cornerstone of modern political discourse. It has reached a level of near divinity, with politicians and regular citizens alike worshiping their nation-state and viewing the world with a simple division, the Us and the Them. In a pattern that reappears constantly and consistently non-citizens are denied essential human rights under the guise of nationalism. But whether one recognizes it or not, nationalism is dead and it’s time to move on.

This degree of patriotism has been a continual force against justice and equality throughout the histories of all countries, especially the United States. For example, giving support to the string of foreign dictators who ended up committing massive human rights violations was justified because a benefit to American citizens, a benefit that was primarily monetary, was seen as more important than detriments to fellow human beings. All too often, foreign policy initiatives are justified based on the fact that those who the policies hurt are simply not “one of us.” On the other hand, the seeming importance of national borders has lead to inaction in the face of situations that call to the humanity of all people. The most obvious example occurred during the Rwandan Genocide. The people that died simply were not important enough to warrant an attempt to stop the grave consequences that would follow. Moreover, the United States lobbied the United Nations for a complete withdrawal of U.N. forces in 1994. If, instead of occurring in Rwanda, the genocide happened in the middle of Arkansas, the U.S. would surely have done something to stop the killings. It is certain that, at the very least, the U.S. would label the event a genocide as soon as possible, instead refusing to use the term genocide to describe it until weeks later.

The only true question is how one can possibly justify treating some people as subhuman and allowing oneself to ignore the distress of people experiencing massive human rights violations.

Certainly, these policies place us among the most hypocritical nations in the world. What other nation affirmed natural rights for all people even before its official inception? To quote the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” In order to assert separateness from Great Britain, rights were expressed that belonged to all human beings by their very nature as humans. In acting under the guise of nationalism, America has destroyed the values at its very foundation and simultaneously covered them with a veil of self-interest.

All this would be irrelevant if sovereignty could still be held as the inviolable property that it once was. Surely the rights a nation has for its own self-definition come prior to benefits that may or may not come to pass in the future. Even on this level, however, the nationalist perspective is flawed. The territory of the state and its sovereignty are no longer binding upon other countries. Historically, supranational institutions such as the International Criminal Court verify this shift. In the same vein, the Nuremberg trials expressed a shift towards an international sphere where leaders cannot hide behind the sovereignty of their countries to avoid the repercussions of crimes against humanity. Furthermore, nations are no longer independent and as such cannot limit their obligations to only those people in an implicit social contract. The emergence of the global financial system, where the currency of each country is tied to international perception, as well as the currency of other countries, as well as the need for commodities, and approval beyond one’s borders indicates that nations are interdependent. The libertarian ideal of sovereignty must be abandoned. No one can express one’s own freedom, and pursue the ends one chooses, without the cooperation and efforts of people from all around the world. This is also true on an individual level: the money one spends on goods continues to support the policies that are being used by the original vendor in order to make more purchases to the point where that money can be found in the pockets of people the world over.

A somewhat more important justification lies in the basis for all current laws and precepts. Traditionally, following the Declaration of Independence, the acceptability of laws is found in their ability to stand up to the common discourse and thus be consistent with the consent of the populace. The freedom to speak out against government practices is a fundamental part of legitimizing those very same practices. This means, in the words of Jürgen Habermas,
that “every legal order, including that within the state, [comes] from a more original law, which gives rights to every person ‘qua human being.’” All countries must therefore hold the basis for all laws, the value of the human being, in higher regard than sovereignty and thereby grant all people access to an international and global society comprising individuals with particular cultural backgrounds and beliefs but all accountable to their inherent humanity. Whether recognized or not, there is an underlying cosmopolitan structure to the international arena such that genocide in other countries is just as important as similar actions in America.

A transition to the cosmopolitan mode of thought from the American political record similar to the Age of Imperialism that described civilizing the savages, has waged war through both overt and covert operations to the devastation of the local population and American soft power. The role of the hegemon has allowed the United States to pass off interventions designed solely for self-interest as humanitarian and for the betterment of all mankind. While the record on that humanitarian front is dismal, the American political record similarly expresses the hypocrisy of this statement. Oftentimes, the United States will only ratify a United Nations charter once it has removed any precepts that would force it to change its actions. It has also refused to ratify treaties that express values and principles that ought to speak to everyone. The US record in this area is a laundry list of lost opportunities. It includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whether a captured person is truly a criminal and as such is constitutive of the punishment process in general. The most common objection is some permutation of the phrase “But of course they are terrorists, we caught them trying to plant bombs in a crowded city street.” This rings hollow when one considers the fact that even mass murderers whom the political mode of thought from the turn of the 20th century says we should call criminals are constitutional. At the end of the day, this is not the problem. The justifications for these nationalistic one is of the utmost importance, especially given the unique record of the United States in supporting human rights. Under the guise of spreading democracy, greatly reminiscent of justifications from the Age of Imperialism that described civilizing the savages, has waged war through both overt and covert operations to the devastation of the local population and American soft power. The role of the hegemon has allowed the United States to pass off interventions designed solely for self-interest as humanitarian and for the betterment of all mankind. While the record on that humanitarian front is dismal, the American political record similarly expresses the hypocrisy of this statement. Oftentimes, the United States will only ratify a United Nations charter once it has removed any precepts that would force it to change its actions. It has also refused to ratify treaties that express values and principles that ought to speak to everyone. The US record in this area is a laundry list of lost opportunities. It includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whether a captured person is truly a criminal and as such is constitutive of the punishment process in general. The most common objection is some permutation of the phrase “But of course they are terrorists, we caught them trying to plant bombs in a crowded city street.” This rings hollow when one considers the fact that even mass murderers whom the

The relationship between China and North Korea has become increasingly important ever since Kim Jong Un and the North Korean government have threatened to bomb the United States and even declared war on the US. At first glance it may seem like the relationship between these two powerful countries may actually be dangerous for the United States because they have been allies for decades. For example, Jayshree Bayjoria of the Council on Foreign Relations explains, “China is North Korea’s most important ally; biggest trading partner; and main source of food and fuel.” This statement depicts China as the reason why North Korea is still relatively powerful and an additional obstacle in the United State’s already difficult predicament. This reliance on China by North Korea, however, entails the completely opposite effect, one that is extremely beneficial for the interests of the United States. Brian Fung of Northwestern University justifies this claim, “North Korea’s closest ally will be more important than ever in President Obama’s second-term dealings with Pyongyang.” In some ways, it’ll be more of the same: China has long been a member of the Six Party Talks that the West has used as a bulwark against North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. China is among the DPRK’s biggest trading partners, and it’s where the isolated state gets much of its fuel, raw materials, and finished products, such as cars. As a result, Beijing is often thought to have a good deal of sway over Pyongyang.

In addition, China is able to keep North Korea in check, unlike any other country in the world. Furthermore, China is uniquely able to exercise its influence over North Korea by threatening to pull the plug on any trade. On March 7, 2013, the UN Security Council imposed new, harsher sanctions on North Korea in an attempt to punish the unstable country for its recent nuclear test. Dis-similar to past actions, China went along with this resolution. The Christian Science Monitor then stated, “Beijing’s vote was widely seen as a signal of just how impatient China is getting with its ‘little brother,’ who has been getting more and more wayward in recent months, launching missiles and detonating nuclear devices despite public Chinese warnings not to do so.” All in all, China’s leverage over North Korea and its recent compliance with the UN sanctions have proven beneficial for the national security of the United States.
**Notable World Events**

Compiled by Nishwant Swami

**Boston Marathon Tragedy**

On Monday, April 15th, two bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. Over 144 individuals were treated in the aftermath of the terrorist attack, and three were reported dead at the scene. Almost immediately, the authorities focused their investigation on two brothers, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who were Islamic extremists with roots in Dagestan and Chechnya. Within a few days, Tamerlan had been killed by authorities, and Dzhokhar was being prosecuted as he recovered from injuries sustained in his escape. While this threat has been neutralized, the devastation has impacted thousands of people in the population, the international community has done very little in assisting the rebellion. This official statement, however, could signal a change in American policy in Syria, as President Obama has declared in the past that the use of chemical weapons would spur American intervention in the civil war-ridden country.

**White House claims Chemical Attacks in Syria**

The White House has released a statement declaring that they believe the Syrian government of President Assad is using the chemical weapon, sarin, on a small scale. For over a year, the people of Syria have made it quite clear that they will not stop revolting until their dictator Bashar Al-Assad is deposed. Despite a clear message from domestic flooding. After months of coping with severe drought, the Midwest is now contending with the opposite, but equally dangerous problem: severe flooding. After nearly eight inches of rainfall fell in certain areas, the flooding has destroyed fields, forced evacuations, and inhibited traffic down the Mississippi River. Already, three people have died in events linked to the flooding. Officials are currently struggling with possible solutions, including sandbags, in order to avoid further damage, but unfortunately no efforts have been successful thus far. While the short term effects are clearly negative, the inability for farmers to plant their crops could lead to widespread economic hardship this summer.

**Earthquake devastates southwest China**

An earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 rocked the Southwestern Sichuan province, killing at least 192 people. Chinese authorities are working quickly to accommodate the tens of thousands of people that are now homeless and lack basic resources. The international community is quickly responding, and the joint international and domestic effort is making strides towards returning Sichuan to normalcy.

**Factory Collapse in Bangladesh**

The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh could be considered one of the worst manufacturing disasters after the death toll reached 256 on Thursday. According to authorities, there were multiple signals that the building was unsafe, including visible cracks in the walls. Many major US and European clothing companies are now facing backlash, after labels including Children’s Place, Benetton, Cato Fashions, and Mango were found at the factory.

**When Teachers Attack…**

After Enrique Pena Nieto, the Mexican president, passed an overhaul of the education system, teachers across the country rose up in protest. The education effort takes away power from the teachers unions in key areas, including teacher evaluations, salaries, and dismissals. Already, local offices of Pena Nieto have been attacked, and the office of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Pena Nieto’s political party) has been set on fire.

**Domestic Flooding**

**Fertilizer Plant Disaster Spurs Debate About Regulatory Guidelines**

Last week, the nitrogen-rich chemical, ammonium nitrate, was responsible for the explosive destruction of the fertilizer plant in West Texas. The tragic was so powerful that it was equivalent to a 2.1 magnitude earthquake, and was responsible for the death of up to 15 people, including first responders. Local officials are now being criticized for a number of dangerous decisions, including building homes, schools, and a nursing home near the plant. As a federal official explained, “The whole thing may have fallen through a number of regulatory cracks.”

**New Prime Minister, but Same old Problems for Italy**

Desperately trying to find a solution to Italy’s economic woes, President Giorgio Napolitano appointed center-left Democra tic Party official Enrico Letta. With an unemployment rate of 11 percent, an uncooperative government, and growing public anger, Enrico Letta certainly has much to do. Despite being qualified for the job, many already doubt whether he will be able to adequately deal with Italy’s many problems. As deputy director of the School of Government at Luigi Guido Carli University in Rome, Giovanni Orsina, mentioned in a April 24, 2013 article by the New York Times, “It’s going to be hard for him to change the bureaucratic structure, the state machine, because that is the main issue … If your pan has a hole, changing the handle will do little good.”

**The Fight For Mali Continues**

On April 25th, the United Nations Security Council agreed to a new peacekeeping force for Mali. As a country struggling with civil war, Mali needs the force to restore democracy and stabilize the country as a whole. After a coup in March of 2012, Mali became a battlefield between the established government and numerous ethnic groups. Within a few months, a secular group of rebels known as the Tuaregs had taken over close to half the country’s north. With support from the international community, Mali hopes to establish itself as a proud democracy with a bright future.
Dealing with Dzhokhar: The Terrorism Tipping Point

Jack Lynch

As the Boston Marathon bombings fade into the past and the prosecution of the one living suspect, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, begins to move forward, the United States government and judicial system will be faced with a daunting task: finding a satisfactory punishment for a 19-year-old American student who, along with his older brother, killed three people, injured over one hundred others, and terrorized a city and a nation. Many patriotic Americans will likely be unhappy with anything short of capital punishment, considering the heinousness of the crime. In reality, however, capital punishment is perhaps the most un-American solution possible.

Over the past decade, the United States government has struggled with how to handle domestic terrorists. Some have been deported or sent to federal prisons within the country. Others have been hunted down by unmanned aircrafts in foreign lands or sent to prison camps in Cuba or the Middle East. But now, the government has been presented with a high-profile case of the utmost importance, with the nation and the world watching for the outcome. With this shift in spotlight must come a shift in policy. It is time to prosecute American terrorists in a way that lives up to the principles of American justice and the U.S. legal system is stronger and more effective than any form of petty violence, state-ordered or not.

The coming weeks will be a definitive time in post-9/11 society. The moment has come for the world to show that it can combat terrorism while still protecting its citizens’ rights and principles. It is essential that the United States takes the leads in ushering in this new era of counterterrorism. Whether it takes place in a crowded Boston street or in a cold execution room in a federal prison, killing will always be wrong. It is the duty of a truly just nation to rise above violence, and find a more profound sense of justice.

When the pro-death-penalty voice inevitably rises during the course of Tsarnaev’s trial, it will be because capital punishment supporters want to use his execution to send a message. They will want to make it clear to others across the globe and within our borders that terrorism against the United States will be dealt with harshly and mercilessly. They will want to show that violence like what was exhibited at the marathon is wrong.

But there is only one way to demonstrate that killing is not an acceptable form of political statement, and that is to imprison the Boston bomber for the rest of his natural life. Rather than right fight violence with violence, it is time for the United States to make a real statement about its justice system. By imprisoning Tsarnaev, the U.S. would be sending a message across the globe that terrorism cannot and does not damage the founding principles of American justice and that the U.S. legal system is stronger and more effective than any form of petty violence, state-ordered or not.

Dunbar and other numbers

Kabbas Azhar


What do all of these terms have in common? Besides the animosity that pervades the relationships between these countries, all of them share one concrete thing: they’re all made up of human beings.

Often enough, we, as human beings, marginalize the other in an attempt to affirm our own humanity. Whenever any indication of humanizing the enemy combatant/political opponent/adversary captures our attention, a curious outrage takes over our mannerism. Case in point; consider the fact that Osama bin Laden was an avid reader that enjoyed volleyball and soccer. This information is always revealed as “shocking” and “mind-blowing,” somehow forgetting the fact that while Osama was indeed a deplorable human being, he was still a human being with his own interests and hobbies. It seems to be a common habit: reducing individuals to caricatures for our own benefit. World War II, for example, saw the rise of the term ‘gooks,’ which dehuman-
ized the Japanese against whom we were fighting in the War. In all honesty, such behavior seems completely understandable and even practical, as killing another ‘gook’ presents itself to be much easier than killing another human being who fights in order to serve his country and to keep his family safe.

Yet, this perception of other individuals becomes extremely troubling at a more personal level. Even in our daily lives, we often see other individuals as only one-dimensional caricatures, typified by the functions they perform for us rather than as human beings. Sure, you intellectually realize that the waiter or the garbage collector is a human being, yet the empathy for their humanity does not necessarily exist. How many among you have seen a homeless individual, and instead of just giving some money (if even that is done), have actually talked to and empathized with that individual? Presumably, not most of us, I can assure you.

The problem inherently lies with the fact that we indeed are human beings. According to British anthropologist Robert Dunbar, we only can keep legitimate social relationships with approximately 150 people. (This limit is a direct function of the relative size of a human’s neocortex.) We, as a species, are evolutionarily biased against former deeper connections beyond a specified limit, and any connections made beyond that limit consist of cardboard cutouts rather than three-dimensional, living, breathing, feeling human beings. It’s just another reason why we are so nonchalant and unconcerned about others beyond a superficial veneer and conjure up specific images in our minds to relate to these ‘others.’ Be it the terrifying “Big Government” (Republicans) or the morally bankrupt “corporations” (Democrats), we tend to clump other humans and their motivations into one big vague mass (because both big government and morally bankrupt corporations are made up of multitudes of people).

Marginalization of other individuals composes a key facet of the human condition. In lieu of the globalization of the whole world, where we have connections with thousands of individuals, through a myriad of venues (a la Facebook), this fact regarding our very perception of other human beings becomes extremely important. The anonymity given by the internet and the subsequent rise in bullying can easily be attributed to our lack of empathy towards human beings. In fact, most problems in society can be attributed to that lack of empathy that we possess, which in the end, seems to be inevitable.

It’s indeed an evolutionary fact that we can only empathize with a select number of people. In fact, some people might venture to say that we cannot do anything about this truth of human interaction. Yet, just like we have risen above our base instincts, I do believe we can accomplish a similar feat in our daily social interactions. We can attempt to be conscious of our interactions with others, and raise ourselves beyond our natural state. As Atticus Finch said, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

We all should endeavor to do the same, and always climb into another’s skin and empathize with their basic humanity in whatever attempt we try to do.

Kim Jong Un-Prepared: Why North Korea Isn’t a Real Threat

Alex Zhang

On December 17, 2011, the Korean Central News agency reported the death of longtime ruler of North Korea Kim Jong II. After a period of uncertainty, his son Kim Jong Un took up the mantle of his father; since then, North Korea has become increasingly aggressive toward the United States. We’ve all heard of the new dictator’s threats. On January 24, earlier this year, North Korea issued a statement that listed America as a target of its nuclear weapons program. “We do not hide that a variety of satellites and long-range rockets which will be launched by the D.P.R.K. one after another and a nuclear test of higher level will target against the U.S., the sworn enemy of the Korean people,” the statement said. Pyongyang further issued threats against the United States, threatening to “break the waists of the crazy enemies, totally cut their windpipes and thus clearly show them what a real war is
Clearly, this is a hugely escalated version of North Korea’s standard diplomatic behavior. But should we, as American citizens, actually be worried by these threats? Is there a real threat of a nuclear attack, or are these statements just an exaggerated manifestation of North Korea’s usual bluffs, intended only to maintain domestic unity and facilitate government control?

It is my belief that these statements are ultimately unsubstantiated. According to the South Korean Defense Ministry, the D.P.R.K. has about 820 fighter jets in its air force. This is enough to cause some degree of damage, and is even greater than South Korea’s air force at 460, but the Ministry further reports that Pyongyang lacks an adequate fuel supply to operate them. Furthermore, many North Korean jets are in disrepair and are not combat ready, whereas Seoul’s arsenal is fully functional and better maintained. The rest of the North’s army reflects these characteristics; at 1.1 million, its armed forces are the fourth largest in the world. However, these soldiers are poorly trained and rely on outdated tactics and military technology, severely diminishing any threat they may pose.

According to Jennifer Lind of Dartmouth College, Pyongyang’s clear goal of manufacturing nuclear weapons and missiles is a direct result of this “paper-tiger” army. Lind further draws upon 1995 analyses about North Korean military capabilities during the Korean War; these reports show that their air force was “so antiquated that it would have been shot out of the sky in the first few hours of a conflict.”

Taking into account the recent food shortages and famines, it is likely that the D.P.R.K.’s military has deteriorated somewhat since the 1950s conflict; it is improbable that enough new technological advancements have been made so as to elevate Pyongyang’s military capabilities to a meaningful level.

Even with nuclear weapons, North Korea remains an insignificant threat. George Lopez, a political science professor at the University of Notre Dame, explains that while it is one thing to construct a small nuclear warhead, it is another to actually deliver it. He explains that even if the North does have such a weapon, “they do not have the capability to reliably reach a target.” Relatively unconventional delivery methods would still have a very low chance of success. For example, of using an airplane to deliver a nuclear payload, Lopez states that “it would be pretty difficult, probably impossible.”

It is true that we should definitely not ignore these threats. North Korea does have some military competence, and it is entirely possible that its government is more capable than our estimates. However a quick run-down of the facts can let us relax, if only slightly. Simply put, based on all our cumulative knowledge of the D.P.R.K., it is unlikely that Pyongyang will be able to do any significant damage to Seoul or Washington.

In the United States today, we all hear a lot of debate over healthcare policy—especially since the Affordable Care Act was passed under President Obama. The largest point of contention is the health insurance mandate: a requirement for every citizen to buy health insurance. If the citizen cannot afford it, the government covers the costs. In this article, I argue in favor of a health insurance mandate. I believe it saves lives and money, improving quality of life for every American citizen.

**The mentally ill:**

The Houston Journal of Health Law and Policy explains in 2011 that one in five adults suffers from an anxiety disorder or one in ten from a mood or personality disorder. Unfortunately, mental illness care in America is lacking. The Washington Post reports mentally ill individuals do not have health insurance for two primary reasons. First, about 45% of those not receiving care list cost as the barrier. Second, employer-
sponsored insurance tends to ignore mental health needs completely. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, however, “[Out of the] 32 million Americans (who would be covered with an insurance mandate), 6-10 million people will now get treatment for a mental disorder.” Mandated health insurance will not only significantly improve the lives of the mentally ill, but it will also reduce the amount of violent criminal activities. The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare found that people with an untreated mental illness were 4-6 times more likely to commit a crime. It also concludes that mandated health insurance decreases the number of national criminals by 10 million.48

**Saving lives:**

Senate Majority leader William Frist explained in 2009 that those “Those without health insurance on average receive poorer care and die sooner.” This is true for two main reasons. First, hospitals give worse treatment to the uninsured because they are less likely to be insured and treated. In fact, a study from the Council of Economic Advisers in 2009 found that after a severe auto accident, those without health insurance received 20% less care than those with insurance. Second, the uninsured have less access to preventive care. Families USA found in a June 2012 study that the uninsured are four times more likely than those insured to have difficulty accessing health care screenings because of cost.49

All in all, the New York Times reports that the uninsured are 50% less likely to receive important preventive care, like cancer tests.

Requiring health insurance, therefore, has several benefits. First, Michael McWilliams of Harvard Medical notes that adjusting for a wide set of characteristics, those with the most basic form of health insurance are 43% less likely to die within 10 years than those without insurance.50 In fact, Alex Stewart of George Washington University notes that an insurance mandate would provide the option to 870 million Americans to be given vaccinations that they would not otherwise get, which, according to the Center for Disease Control, may solve for the 50,000 American deaths caused by vaccine-preventable diseases every year.51 Additionally, David Cecere of the Cambridge Health Alliance finds that nearly 45,000 Americans deaths every year are directly caused by a lack of health insurance.52

Approximately 21% of the U.S. lives in these rural areas, so it is important to address this far-reaching problem. Significantly, the Center for Rural Affairs reports that an insurance mandate reduces American excess mortality and could save these lives.

**Rural Americans:**

For those living in rural conditions, health insurance is limited for multiple reasons. Scott Lindstrom of the Idaho Law Review explains in 2011: in rural areas, one insurance company usually dominates the market, sometimes at around an 8% margin. Often, rural locations do not attract many insurance options, leading to this sort of monopoly and inflating the cost of insurance. Additionally, rural workers often do not qualify for insurance because they have preexisting conditions or high-risk occupations. Thus, they either do not receive insurance at all or are offered extremely high premiums solely because of their jobs.

The only way to fix this problem is by requiring health insurance. The Rural Policy Research Institute notes in 2009 that doing so would address the problems faced by rural Americans: First, it necessitates bringing state insurance exchanges into the market, breaking the monopoly. Second, it prevents preexisting conditions from becoming a factor for disqualification. In fact, a requirement would solve for the 17% of uninsured rural Americans by addressing the two primary issues they face: cost and access.

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