



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

EAST ASIAN STUDIES CENTER

Institute for Korean Studies Lecture Series

North Korea after the End of History

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Monday, April 10, 2017 (Registration required; link below)

12:00-1:15 pm

Mershon Center for International Security Studies, Rm 120

1501 Neil Ave

Abstract: The collapse of the North Korean regime has been predicted many times since the end of the Cold War more than a quarter-century ago. Yet today the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) not only continues to exist, but appears to be doing relatively well economically, and has repeatedly defied UN sanctions and global condemnation by conducting nuclear and long-range missile tests. What explains North Korea's survival into the twenty-first century and its ability to resist international norms, despite the country's isolation and objective weakness? What are the possibilities and risks for North Korea under Kim Jong Un? How should the new administrations in the US and South Korea understand and deal with an assertively nuclear North Korea?

This talk argues that North Korea has been incorrectly viewed through a Cold War lens, when in fact the DPRK was always an outlier in the communist world and was unlikely to follow the path of communist collapse. Seemingly against all odds North Korea survived the so-called "end of history," in which the global ascendance of liberal democracy and capitalism was widely predicted. In our emerging post-post Cold War world of neo-nationalism, postmodern authoritarianism and illiberal democracy, North Korea may continue in some form for the foreseeable future. Therefore the "North Korea problem" is unlikely to be resolved by near-term regime change; the problem is embedded within a Korean division structure that is *sui generis*, not merely a vestige of the Cold War, and it is that larger division structure that must be addressed in order to achieve stability and peace in Korea.

Bio: Charles K. Armstrong is The Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Studies in the Social Sciences in the Department of History at Columbia University. He is the author of over forty academic articles and numerous books, including *The Koreas* (Routledge: second edition, 2014); *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950 – 1992* (Cornell, 2013); and *The North Korean Revolution, 1945 – 1950* (Cornell, 2003). Professor Armstrong holds a B.A. in Chinese Studies from Yale University, a master's degree in International Relations from the London School of Economics, and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago. He teaches Korean, East Asian, Asia-Pacific and world history, and is a frequent commentator in the US and international media on Korean affairs and US-East Asian relations.

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