

Research Report | XXV Annual Session

Security Council

The situation in North Korea



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

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Forum:	Security Council
Issue:	The situation in North Korea
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Introduction

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been facing economic, social and humanitarian instability since its creation in 1945. As it is globally known, North Korea remains as one of the very few totalitarian socialist states and the most self-isolated country in the world.

Human rights violations, poverty, severe famines and the death of its leaders are examples of the little information international community has heard of North Korea. However, global community started getting more informed in 2009 when North Korea commenced with its missile tests and weapon threats. The North Korean nuclear crisis and its impact on international diplomacy will be the focus of this research report.

Assuredly, political powers did not take long to react towards these threats. Importantly, several sanctions were put on North Korea to avoid its economic and nuclear growth. Ever since, international diplomacy towards North Korea has been facing constant tensions in order to constructively solve North Korea's nuclear crisis. Hence, the topic's discussion and debates will be directly related to the main theme of 2015 MUNISH conference "*Good Governance and Cooperation*".

Definition of Key Terms

Marxism

Oxford Dictionaries defines Marxism as "the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, later developed by their followers to form the basis of communism."

Leninism

According to Cambridge Dictionaries Leninism is defined as “the social, political, and economic principles and theories developed from Marxism by the Russian politician V. I. Lenin, supporting direct rule by workers.”

Six Party Talks

The Six Party Talks is a program, which consists on negotiations among China, the United States of America, North and South Korea, and Japan in order to “denuclearize” North Korea.

General Overview

Korea during the Cold War

Korea used to be a Japanese colony from 1910 to 1945. After the Japanese defeat in World War II, the northern Korean area was occupied by the Soviet Union and the southern territories by the United States of America (USA). Following in 1948 two Korean republics were created. In August 1948 the Republic of Korea was proclaimed in the south, whereas the Communist People’s Democratic Republic was declared in the north. Soviet and United States (US) military occupation left Korean territories in 1948. In 1949 both Korean governments sued unification. Continuous threats were sent to each other’s’ governments in order to reunify the peninsula. In 1950 northern troops invaded the border and took over the South Korean capital Seoul. At this point, the United Nations (UN) advised military intervention to protect the South Korean territory. Fifteen UN member nations including the USA sent troops to Korea. North Korean troops were defeated and the North Korean capital Pyongyang fell to US and UN troops’ control. As a result, North Korea’s main allies China and the Soviet Union involved in the war also sent military intervention. In this case, US and UN troops were counterattacked and sent out North Korea. The Korean peninsula found itself in the same situation as a year earlier. Soon after, peace talks began in 1951 and an armistice agreement was signed in 1953. Yet, both Korean territories remained divided. Throughout these two years of peace making the two Korean governments put pressure on their allies so that the fight continued and by this, be able to take over their opposite side. The USA, the Soviet Union and China recognized that the situation in Korea had become too dangerous and continuing the war would be too risky. Therefore, at this point foreign military support ended. Since then North Korea never fully recovered from the war. In fact, both sides remain having political tensions due to North Korea’s threats and ambition for nuclear power.

Politics



North Korea has a only party rule. North Korea's unique party is called the Workers' Korean Party. Their political system origins come from the Soviet Union model. Thereby, it is obviously a communist party. According to the North Korean government, Kim Il Sung founded this party in 1945.

Party membership is allowed to "advanced fighters" such as workers, peasants and working intellectuals who day by day exert for the "success of a socialist and communist aims". Nevertheless, military plays a political role. Members of the military have the chance to have prestigious positions on top party organs at the party.

The North Korean government claims to have over 3 million members at its party. The party's main concept is the "Chuch'e", which means "national self-reliance". In North Korea the "Chuch'e" can be applied to the general principles of Marxism and Leninism.

Since the Soviet Union occupation in 1948 the only Korean leadership developed its own way and modified its constitution. Yet, this new constitution avoided Marxism and Leninism as main principals of national goals. It gave supreme military power to chairman of the national defence of commission Kim Il Sung.

The Party's principal job is to ensure and enforce general compliance with Kim Il Sung's and party policies and ideologies. However, Kim Il Sung's work is never revised, but simply applied as it mandates. For any North Korean citizen there is no greater honour to be fully and unconditionally loyal to his memory.

Family dynasty

Kim Jong-un is the current North Korean political leader. His grandfather Kim Il Sung was the first North Korean leader. Soviet leaders chose Kim Il Sung during the Soviet occupation in northern Korean territory. Kim Il Sung reigned in North Korea until his death in 1994. His reign lasted 50 years. He is known as the, "Great Leader", "Heavenly Leader" or the "Sun". The North Korean government created a calendar on his honour. The calendar uses his year of birth 1992 as year one for all North Korean citizens.

According to the North Korean government the North Korean constitution of 1998 was modified to declare Kim Il Sung the eternal and only president of the country. Therefore, both anniversaries of birth and death are nowadays-national legitimate holidays in North Korea.

His son Kim Jong-il shared similar values and was the centre of the North Korean worship. Both of their deaths were commemorated with immense emotion from the people



with massive funerals. Even memorials such as several statues were built on their names despite the current famines and poverty issues.

Social

The DPRK signed four international human rights treaties. Yet, the basic rights of its population are violated by the government. According to the Human Rights Watch report on North Korea, the government does not tolerate: “organized political opposition, free media, functioning civil society, or religious freedom”. The results of these prohibitions are reflected on its society.

The North Korean population has been facing major food shortages and famine issues since 2011. The government reacts unfairly towards its population and beneficiaries food policies in favor of its military and officials.

The DPRK’s judiciary system is not transparent for the rest of the world. The government chooses the members of its judiciary system such as judges, lawyers and jury members. Individuals with criminal charges in North Korea are vulnerable to torture by the officials. According to North Korean refugees, anything is practiced on the “criminals” in order to confess and secure obedience. Furthermore, incoherent executions take place due to small crimes such as non-violent offenses. North Korea has extended its death penalties to a new level in 2007. Death penalties are executed even in cases of fraud and smuggling. Further types of punishment on the “criminals” are the “political prisoner camps”. The government does not only enforce punishment on the criminals, but on their relatives as well. The camps are estimated to have inhumane living conditions, lack of medical care and severe physical and psychological mistreatment. Nevertheless, North Korea has not recognized the existence of such camps, yet.

Labor rights are controlled by the only North Korean party. The workers’ working conditions are below the international standard since they do not belong to the International Labour Organization (ILO). Standards on protection of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and freedom of association do basically not exist for the workers in North Korea.

The government just partly controls its people with fear and terror in order to maintain them obedient to its decisions on home affairs’ actions. Social media is strictly controlled by the government and unauthorized access to any non-state social network is harshly punished. The loyalty of its citizens is every now and then investigated in order to prevent any revolt or contact with the international world.

Economy



Due to North Korea's political system, being a dictatorship, its economy is centrally planned. That means that the government commands what and how goods should be produced. The price of goods is therefore decided for the country's profit. Such a command economy is also equivalent to the ones from China, Cuba and the former Soviet Union. However, it is more compatible to Cuba since North Korea has been isolated from the international market due to several sanctions.

North Korea's only and main trading partners are China and South Korea. The exports are divided in such way that 63 % of all exports are for China and the rest 27 % to South Korea. The exports have been reported to be mainly minerals, metallurgical products, manufactures, textiles, agricultural and fishery products, whereas the imports are known to be peritoneum, cooking coal, machinery and equipment.

The Gross Domestic product (GDP) per capita according to CIA Factbook ranks at the 194 place and amounts to be 1,800 \$. 23 % of the GDP comes from agriculture. Moreover, the agricultural sector incorporates 35 percent of the countries labour force. Around 47 % is contributed by industry and 29 % by services.

This is one of the very few information available to the rest of the world. North Korea does not give manifestation about its economic data. Yet, it's known for investing the majority of its monetary resources in its military. The main industries consist in military products such as: machine building, electric power, chemicals, metallurgy, etc.

Throughout the past years the DPRK has attached a lot of importance onto the defense economy, but in contrast it has not emphasized the value on modernization, food and living standards.

According to the Ministry of Unification, "until 1966, the defense sector comprised around 10 percent of total expenditures, but this rose to over 30 percent in the period from 1967 to 1971. Since the 1970s, the official budget allocated to defense in North Korea has been 14 to 17 percent, but many experts presume that the regime actually spends around 30 to 50 percent of its total safe funds on the defense industry."

North Korean crisis in 2013

In January 2013 a new nuclear test with long-range rockets was announced by North Korea. This action appears to be part of the new step of rivalry against the United States of America. These threats were heard two days after the United Nations Security Council had approved the broadening of sanctions to the rocket launch in December from the previous year and putting a satellite in orbit.

Later in February, underground nuclear bomb test took place. This test was used "to defend the country's security and sovereignty in the face of ferocious hostile act of the US"



according to North Korean central of new agency. These threats were just a first step to responding to the United States hostility. If this continues, North Korea assured that further actions and measures would be taken to protect their country's security.

In March North Korea was provoked again by sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council due to nuclear strike against US and South Korea. North Korea further expressed its strong disagreement with its denuclearization and reports. The DPRK publicly admitted that intercontinental ballistic missiles would be ready to be fired at any time. On the contrary, Obama responded to North Korean threat by announcing plans to "deploy" extra ground base missile interceptors on the west coast. North Korea threatened US and South Korean bases and claimed that its military will be ready to fight. North Korean capital informed about rockets targeting the US by releasing photos that show in detail Kim Jong-un with his military officials with their strike maps on the United States.

In April the DPRK claimed that it would restart Yongbyon nuclear complex, uranium enrichment plant and reactor. Both were shut down due to October 2007 talks on North Korea. Hence, the US did not accept North Korea as nuclear state. North Korean capital informed that it could guarantee the safety of embassies and international organization during the possible newly commenced armed conflict. US official informed about two medium range missiles along North Korean east coast. The "joint of industrial complex" cooperation is between the countries (North and South Korea). Kaesong Industrial Complex is situated on the northern side of the border. North Korean capital blocked the entrance for South Korean workers to Kaesong where thousands of North Koreans work. The DPRK told foreigners to evacuate in case of any attacks. Immediately, Japan moved missile defence systems into place around Tokyo. US official claimed that a missile test could be "imminent". KCNA (Korean Central News Agency) reported sport events on the 101 anniversary of Kim Il sung. Yet, there seemed to be no tensions on North Korean population.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

South Korea

In the past decades former South Korean government did not seem to be very keen to work for a conciliatory goal with its neighbor: North Korea. However, the current South Korean president Park Geun-hye has also not changed previous conservative foreign policy towards North Korea. The South Korean government expresses that relations with North Korea are in a climate of counterproductive engagement. South Korea believes that North

Korean willingness to cooperate on crisis is very vague. According to Park, North Korea will have to fully commit to dialogues in order to finish denuclearization. The South Korean government works in close ties with the USA on the North Korean crisis. The North Korean government announced that they would denuclearize in exchange of peaceful relations with the USA and the South Korean government and the elimination of economic sanctions. Nevertheless, South Korea has not shown direct interest on this announcement for reconciliation due to North Korean background willingness of own economic thrust.

Japan

The Japanese government is wishing to normalize relations with the North Korean government. One of Japan's main goals with the North Korean government is to resolve the "abduction issue" of many Japanese citizens in North Korea. Only 4 of them have been released so far. This issue between the North Korean and Japanese government severely impacts the Japanese citizens sovereignty. Therefore, it provokes tensions and complications among Japanese and North Korean diplomatic relations. Moreover, Japan also wants to concentrate on such current issues such as missiles tests and denuclearization. For these matters, the Japanese government works in close ties with the USA, China and Russia. Japan takes also part of the Six Party talks, in which the participant member states work in close coordination to solve North Korea's nuclear ambition crisis. Furthermore, Japan entertains unofficial talks with North Korean government on consultations on North Korea's political situation and political relations. The Japanese government completely disapproves North Korea's recent missiles launches. Thereby, Japan has constant contact with the USA government to diplomatically solve the North Korean crisis.

Russia

The Russian Federation has been one of the closest allies of North Korea since World War II. The Russian government has economic interests on the Korean peninsula with both governments: North and South. Russia is concerned about the USA and North Korea's tensions due to the consequences and impact on Russia's future projects with the Korean peninsula. The Russian government believes that further sanctions as a threat for the Korean government will be counterproductive. This counter productivity would lead to developed lack of comprehension and cooperation with the diplomatic community on the crisis. Nevertheless, the current Russian president Vladimir Putin rejected North Korea as a new nuclear weapon state, which would signify changes on Russian influence in Northeast Asia. According to Russian policy, Moscow would rather go to the USA's side in case that North Korea firmly proceeds with its nuclear reactivity intentions. However, if further sanctions are placed on North Korea, the Russian government will be pushed to North Korea and China's



side to maintain diplomatic stability. Russia has supported talks between the USA and North Korea as long as Russia can be directly involved in the issue. These so-called “multilateral talks” are aimed to reduce further tensions. Generally seen, the Russian government engages on the crisis due to its future projects on the Korean peninsula. Therefore, Russia believes that they could play a positive role on alleviating the crisis with the help of common ally China.

China

The Chinese government has nowadays cold and superficial relations with North Korea on global politics. In the past decades, the involvement of the Chinese government on the Korean peninsula was more active. Especially in the times of the Cold War, China was part of the triangle of the Soviet Union and North Korea. Both supported each other militarily as well as economically. 1990 geopolitical changes impacted Chinese and North Korean relations. The Chinese government therefore, opened up diplomacy with the South. Currently, China and North Korea’s relations are mainly based on old traditions and past commemorative events. However, China plays the role of a bridge between North Korean and the international, political, economic and diplomatic world. Furthermore, China has been seen responsible for North Korea’s lack of collaboration and inappropriate diplomatic behavior on the crisis. These allegations were however denied by the Chinese government. Thereby, China expects more compromise from the North Korean government side.

United States of America

Obama’s administration offered a diplomatic restart to dictatorial states willing to leave behind their past adversarial relations. After this offer, North Korea followed with its rocket launch in May 2009. For this reason, the USA first policy related to North Korea involved sanctions supported by the United Nations’ member states of the Security Council. On this action, the resolution 1874 was written. The USA takes part of the Six Party talks on North Korea’s denuclearization. The USA government believes that the world should have a “strategic patience”. By this, North Korea might take its own decision to denuclearize the country. The USA also takes part of multilateral talks and negotiations, which intend to avoid tests during the steps of North Korea’s denuclearization. The USA negotiates with South Korea and Japan as main allies on the crisis for strengthening mutual profits. Moreover, open dialogue is also strengthened in case that North Korea shows its willingness to continue with the denuclearization. This would lead to a recover of equilibrium in Asia. The crisis is a challenging situation for the US policy towards North Korea regarding the rockets launches and the three Security Council resolution violations. Framing inter-Korean relations plays a huge role for the USA. Thereby, political stability in South Korea is key for the crisis. Further

US approaches have been dialogues between China and South Korea together with North Korea. This cooperative work would help to avoid misunderstandings and further complications on the agreements. For now, the Republic of Korea (ROK) – US policy coordination is maintained. South Korea remains a key ally for the United States in order to diplomatically solve the crisis.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1945	Japanese occupation ends soviet troops in the north and US troops in the south.
1948	DPRK, Kim Il Sung becomes new leader.
1950	Independence in South Korea from North Korean occupation.
1953	Lack of foreign support and armistice, which lead to the end of the Korean war.
1960s	North Korean industrial growth.
1972	North and South Korea agree declaration of peaceful reunification.
1974	Kim Il sung proclaims his eldest son Kim Jong-il as his successor.
1985	North Korea -international Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
1991	North Korea joins the United Nations (UN).
July, 1994	Kim Il-sung dies. Kim Jong-il proceeds to be North Korea's new leader.
October, 1994	US and North Korea sign a Framework, which secures North Korea's cease of its nuclear programme in return of fuel oil and industrial tools for water.
1996	Famine causes 3 million deaths in North Korea.
1998	North Korea fires multistage long-range rocket, flying over Japan and landing in the Pacific Ocean.
2000	Inter-Korean Summit.



October, 2002	The US and allies Japan and South Korea cease oil shipments after report of North Korea's secret uranium-based nuclear programme development.
December, 2002	Reactivation of North Korean nuclear facilities and expulsion of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors.
January, 2003	Declaration of North Korea's 8000 nuclear fuel rods.
February, 2005	North Korea admits publicly that its nuclear weapon production is for "self-defence" matters.
July, 2006	North Korea test fires missiles. One of them was reported to have the capability to fly to the US.
October, 2006	First underground nuclear weapon test. Resolution 1718 is adopted by the UN, which enforced economic and commercial sanctions for North Korea.
July, 2007	North Korea shuts down Yongbyon reactor after receiving an aid package agreed at the fifth round of Six Party talks.
October, 2007	North Korea agrees to shut down 3 nuclear facilities and reveal all nuclear programs by the end of the year.
October, 2007	Second Inter-Korean summit.
November, 2007	For the first time in 15 years, North and South Korean prime ministers meet and announce economic cooperation.
December, 2007	North Korea misses deadline to announce its nuclear programme.
March-April, 2008	North-South Korean relations deteriorate with the election of new South Korean President.
June, 2008	North Korea declares its nuclear assets.
October, 2008	US strike out North Korea from terrorist blacklist. Therefore, North Korea agrees to leave access to Yongbyon nuclear site.
January, 2009	North Korea accuses South Korea for "hostile intent".
April, 2009	North Korea fires a long-range rocket. UN Security Council condemns the DPRK for leaving the six-party talks and restarting nuclear processes.



May, 2009	DPRK's second underground nuclear test.
June, 2009	UN Security Council submits Resolution 1874.
September, 2010	North Korea organizes meetings with the South in exchange of aid.
December, 2011	Kim Jong-il dies. Kim Jong-un becomes the new leader.
October, 2012	North Korea informs that its missiles can fly as far as to US mainland.
April, 2013	North Korea admits the restart of its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon.
September, 2013	China stops exportations to North Korea in order to avoid the creation of new weaponry.
March, 2014	North Korea tests missiles again since 2009 and violates further UN resolutions.
December, 2014	The Security Council puts the North Korean human rights situation on its schedule. This was objected by Russia and China.
April, 2015	US suspicions over a restart of Yongbyon nuclear station.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- SC Resolution 1540, 2004 (**S/RES/1540**): This resolution calls upon the cooperation of all member states to prevent any form of partnership or help regarding the acquisition of nuclear weapons by the DPRK.
- SC Resolution 1718, 2006 (**S/RES1718**): The Security Council Resolution 1718 sets a number of sanctions and monitoring mechanism to take measures on the on-going ballistic missile program and future nuclear test. It also wished to provide reports on the matter every 90 days.
- Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 18 March 2010 (**A/HRC/13/L.13**): This was the first and base resolution on condemning the human rights violations by the DPRK.
- Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 18 December 2013 (**A/RES/68/183**): This is one of the numerous General Assembly Resolutions expressing concern about the political and social situation in DPRK.



- Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 14 November 2014 (**A/C.3/69/L.28/Rev.1**): Adopted by the General Assembly Third Committee, this resolution decides to submit the report of the Human Rights Council mandated DPRK Commission of Inquiry to the Security Council and encourages to take action incorporating referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- SC Resolution 2207, 2015 (**S/RES/2207**): This is the last Resolution the Security Council has adopted until the date and it reactivates the sanctions set on Resolution 1718 extending them until 2016 by a renovation of the Panel of Expert's mandate instead of an elongation.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The North Korean situation on political tensions, diplomatic struggles, and self-isolation has impacted the international world. The North Korea Nuclear Crisis has not changed much in comparison to other issues. This is because the DPRK's government has not been necessarily collaborative on solving the issue without asking for something in exchange. Furthermore, they have violated almost all agreements and resolutions set by the United Nations. Nevertheless, actions have been taken in order to avoid further development of the nuclear crisis and violations of North Korean citizens' human rights.

Yet, these sanctions did not help to fully solve the issue at hand. They have isolated North Korea as result for their inappropriate actions. But, they have stopped the quick development of North Korea's nuclear reactivation. However, they have not ceased or directly tackled the violation of North Korean citizens' human rights.

In fact, North Korea insists to maintain the face of a crisis, which gives its leaders support from their population. Diplomatic efforts have been tried anyways. North Korea's allies and other states have actually the same goal, which is denuclearizing the country, however, proceeding with different approaches due to their different interests.

In general, one could say that the United Nations has taken actions according to their own limits. The biggest effort on the issue is being done by the diplomatic allies involved. The multiple dialogues have lead North Korea to reconsider certain actions, which were the compensated with something in exchange.

Possible Solutions



The situation in North Korea is an issue that has been challenge for all member states involved. Many attempts have been tried to solve this situation. However, those attempts could be further developed for the betterment of the entire solution program.

Regarding social and economic matters, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) play an important role. Programs of social aid for the citizens can be continued and improved according to the country's betterment. The membership of certain NGO's such as the International Labour Organization should be enforced to all UN member states. Thereby, workers worldwide may have the same treatment on their basic human rights.

Main North Korean allies should continue working on negotiations and multilateral talks with other nations. The intervention of North Korean allies will more or else secure the DPRK's commitment to solve the discussed issue. Sanctions on North Korea should be carefully introduced. Any future inappropriate action on the nuclear crisis should be directly dealt by the United Nations decisions in coordination with North Korea's main allies to avoid provocations. Any action in accordance with the United Nations will have to be tackled to finally solve the crisis' impact on international and national security.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Useful links:

<http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/six-party-talks-north-koreas-nuclear-program/p13593>

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