

PAMUN XVI RESEARCH REPORT— Creating a Framework For Lasting Peace in the Korean Peninsula

Introduction of Topic

Projecting from continental Asia into the Sea of Japan, the Korean peninsula occupies a crucial geopolitical location, sharing its northern border with both Russia and China. Following the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989, it is currently the only country in the world that remains fragmented by civil war, sustained by a precarious ceasefire implemented in 1953.

The magnitude of the issues that pose great threats to the preservation of peace in the region is not limited to the territories of the peninsula itself, but extends across political and cultural borders. The conflict finds its origins in the ideological and political power struggle between the two superpowers, United States and Russia, both of whom are still heavily involved. Over the past decade, the conflict has been the historical source of contention in the international community, engendering severe repercussions that has elicited concerns and condemnations, and deepened the division between the belligerent governments.

Several approaches, such as appeasement, international pressure, etc. have been pursued by governments who, allegedly, sought to find a peaceful and permanent solution to the conflict. However, evidently, none of their strategies were effective, as we see that tension between the two countries remain palpable and have only escalated in the recent years, foreshadowing an ominous future for Korea's reunification.

Definition of Key Terms

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

As the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs designates, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are categorized into nuclear, biological and chemical weapons – frequently referred to as NBC weapons – that is equipped with the capacity to inflict damage and destruction on a massive scale. In 2004, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 1540 in effort to prevent the proliferation of such weapons, demanding that all states to “refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess transport, transfer to use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes”.

Nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons are considered the most dangerous and destructive weapons currently being manufactured, having the capacity to annihilate thousands of lives and cities at once, as evidenced from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Nuclear weapons release energy through either nuclear fission, fusion, or both. Those that use fission are known as atomic bombs while those that use fusion are known as hydrogen bombs, which is considered to be the more destructive from the two. Nuclear bombs can be manufactured using isotopes of the elements plutonium or uranium.

Ballistic missiles

A ballistic missile is a missile that carries a warhead across its trajectory to its target destination. The missiles are classified by the distance they cover during flight and the accuracy they attain. The types are ranked as: short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM), medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM), intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM) and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

Nuclear weapons yield

The term refers to the explosiveness of nuclear bombs when detonated, and is often expressed in terms of TNT equivalent (kilotons, megatons, terajoules).

Demilitarization Zone (DMZ)

The demilitarization zone, often referred to as the 38th parallel, is a buffer zone between the two Koreas created by the Armistice in 1953.

Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was a landmark agreement signed in 1969 that sought to strengthen cooperation between countries to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the disarmament of nuclear weapons. Its content is administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Signed by 190 parties, the treaty defines 'nuclear-weapons countries' as states that have tested a nuclear weapon prior to January 1st 1967, and such are the United States, France, United Kingdom, Russia and China. The current non-signatory states are India, Pakistan, North Korea, South Sudan and Israel.

Cold War

The Cold War was the ideological power struggle during the post-WWII epoch between the two political adversaries: Soviet Union and the United States. The former had pursued a Marxist-Leninist communist state while contrastingly, the latter supported a liberal democratic system. It is crucial to recognize that the Korean War was not a mere domestic conflict, but a proxy war catalyzed by the aggravation of tensions between the United States and the USSR.

Background Information

Pre-WWII: Japanese Colonialism

Since 1910, the Korean peninsula was subjugated under the control of the Japanese Empire, deprived of any practical experience in self-government or economic independence. The Korean language and culture was suppressed by the cultural imperialism practiced by the Japanese Empire who sought to convert the peninsula into its 'loyal subject'.

Meanwhile, numerous exiled groups organized resistance against the Japanese forces, the most notable being the establishment of the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Chungking, the wartime capital of the Chinese nationalists. However, the resistance movement was ineffective in garnering support for independence, as the KPG split with the Korean Revolutionary Party (KRP), who consisted of younger and more progressive exiles. Consequently, by the time of arrival of their awaited liberation, the Korean peninsula was hardly prepared for political nor economic independence.

WWII & The 38th parallel

As WWII progressively turned in favor of the allies, the major powers started to draft prospective plans for the colonies who were to be liberated after the anticipated Japanese surrender. Korean independence was first discussed at the Cairo Conference in 1943, where China, Great Britain and United States agreed that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent". The issue was further discussed at the Yalta Conference in 1945 and the following Potsdam Conference.

After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviet Union, despite its neutrality treaty with Japan, suddenly declared war and commenced attacks against the its forces in continental Asia. On August 10th, a day after the bombing on Nagasaki, the demoralized Japanese troops expressed their will to surrender, while the Russian military continued to march towards the Korea peninsula from the northeast. When the allies decided that Japan was to be temporarily denied the status of an independent power, it created a huge vacuum in East Asia, consisting of previous Japanese colonies such as Manchuria, the Korean peninsula, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, etc. America, sensing a Soviet thirst for expansion, was hugely threatened by the possibility of Asia engulfed by Soviet influences. Prior to WWII, it had originally relied on Japan and China to check the Soviet expansions in the region; however, with Japan defeated and China torn apart by internal conflict between the nationalists and the communists, United States was left with the only choice of intervention, initiating a series of negotiations with the Soviet Union over the Asian territories. In the landmark agreement from the Moscow Conference on December 1945 between the United States, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, a temporary four-power trusteeship of Korea was installed, led by the Soviet-US joint commission responsible for ensuring the establishment of a provisional Korean government. North to the 38th parallel was supervised by the Soviet Union while the remaining southern portion was to be occupied by American forces. For the most part, the fate of the Korean peninsula was decided without significant contribution from the Korean themselves, as the major allies powers, with no considerations of the political, cultural, social and demographic circumstances, divided the peninsula across the 38th to satisfy their own desires.

Soviet-US joint Commission

Under Soviet leadership, North Korea followed the communist model, led by the major political figure Kim Il-Sung, a veteran of the Soviet Army. Under his leadership, the North Korean society was collectivized, key industries nationalized, and land reforms that redistributed property of landlords to peasants were introduced. Backed by the Stalinist regime, Kim Il-Sung then created the North Korean People's Army. Meanwhile, in the South, politics was much more chaotic. The US-educated and staunchly anti-communist figure Syngman Rhee emerged as a prominent political figure. American occupation forces established the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGK), resurrecting the old Japanese colonial administrative structure while dismissing the fledgling KPG.

In order to fully reunite the two Koreas, the United States took the issue to the United Nations, who created the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) in 1947. The commission tried to organize a nation-wide presidential election, which was strongly contested by the Soviet Union. Consequently, two separate elections took place in 1948; in the South, Syngman Rhee was voted as the first president, replacing the US military occupation with the official declaration of the Republic of Korea (ROK) on August 15th. In the North, on September 9th, Kim Il-sung was declared as the prime minister of the newly established Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK); Soviet forces withdrew on December 10th. Both administrations saw themselves as the legitimate government of the peninsula, as both proclaimed their capital as the city of Seoul – a position unchanged until 1972.

The Korean War

After the establishment of the two governments, periodic confrontations ensued, both regimes testing their military resolve against one another. In 1949, raids across the 38th parallel were frequent and the clashes became increasingly violent as time progressed.

Eventually on June 25th 1950, North Korea crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the South in order to reunify the Korean peninsula and restore the territories prior to Japanese colonialism. The North was heavily armed with Russian tanks and artilleries, crushing the hastily assembled Southern forces. Within three days, Seoul was captured and the Rhee government fled in sight of onslaught. The United States invoked the UN Charter to brand North Korea as the aggressor and member states were called upon to send assistance in the fight against the invaders. Nevertheless, the North Korean forces rapidly advanced South, with the aim to seize the vital port of Pusan. American forces sent troops immediately from Japan but fared miserably.

The watershed moment of the war came when General MacArthur brought off a masterstroke by leading an amphibious attack on Inchon during September of 1950. The defensive war then changed into an offensive, as the United States troops drove the northern forces far back the 38th parallel. However, as they marched closer to the Manchurian border, communist China intervened, fearing what they phrased as an “armed aggression against Chinese territory”. The Chinese leader Mao Zedong sent troops to North Korea, warning the United States to stay clear from the Yalu river border unless they wanted a full scale war. A stalemate between the two forces ensued at the 38th parallel.

In mid-1951, armistice talks commenced between the involved parties but was prolonged by debates over the terms of the communist prisoners held in camps in Koje island. Eventually on July 1953, the DPRK, United States and China signed an armistice at Panmunjom, creating the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a buffer area along the 38th parallel where all signatories agreed not to station troops in. The casualties of the Korean War is still unknown, but the figure is estimated to be around 3 million people including civilians.

Post-war Relationships

Momentary rapprochement & South Korea's rapid industrial development

On August 6th, 1971 North Korea indicated its unexpected willingness to contact South Korean officials, reversing its previous position as the sole legitimate state of the peninsula. On August 21st, the officials from the two administration met in Panmunjom to hold conciliatory talks. On July 4th 1972, the two governments issued a joint statement, which consisted of a three-point declaration that laid out the agreements on prospective plans for a peaceful reunification. However, it was later revealed that Pyongyang regime had manipulated the joint statement as a subterfuge to isolate South Korea from its military allies, mainly the United States, to encourage withdrawal of the stationed foreign troops. Naturally, the United States was not happy with the proposal and after President Park's assassination in 1979, the plans were quietly buried.

Meanwhile, during the 1960s, South Korea underwent rapid industrial development in contrast to North Korea's stagnated economy. Prior to the Korean War, North Korea had been the more developed and industrially complex from the two; however, by the 1970s, South Korea had well surpassed DPRK's economic and political capacities.

North Korea's militarization and rising tensions

Although the conflict never reignited into a full scale war, violent incidents took place over the years. Sporadic incidents across the DMZ between 1953 and 1999 resulted in the death of 500 South Korean troops, 50 US soldiers and 250 North Korean soldiers.

In 1980, with the aid from Russian engineers and supplies, North Korea began the construction of its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon. In 1985, the government adopted the NPT only to annul its decision in 2003 after many diplomatic and political reversals and deceptions. In 1993, when the IAEA demanded special inspections of its two nuclear waste storage sites, North Korea threatened to withdraw. It made a similar threat in 1995, and only conceded after US agreed to supply nuclear reactors for power generation. It was also reported that North Korea was developing ballistic missiles. In fact, in 1991, it had test fired a short-range Nodong1 missile over the Sea of Japan and in 1998, it fired a medium-range Taepodong missile over Japan which crashed into the Pacific.

Amidst the tension, there were few reconciliatory attempts from both parties. In 1990, a series of eight meetings took place between the leaders of the two Koreas, resulting in the Agreement on

Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges and Cooperation, and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, talks faltered when disagreements over nuclear inspections arose (North Korea pulled out of the agreements later in 2003). On June 2000, a watershed conference took place between President Kim Dae-jung and Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il. The pact between the two leaders allowed estranged families on either side of the 38th parallel to reunite, marking an interim of abating tension. The conference also paved way for future meetings between such families, which proved to be one of the few successes at reconciliation between the two states.

However tension quickly reached its height when in January 2002, US president George W. Bush labelled North Korea and other possessor states of weapons of mass destruction as the “axis of evil”. In response, North Korea attacked South Korean naval vessels in the Yellow Sea, sacrificing dozens of sailors’ life. In 2003, North Korea officially renounced the NPT, initiating a series of six-party negotiations between the DPRK, ROK, United States, Russia, Japan and China (further discussed under ‘previous attempts to solve the issue’)

North Korea Nuclear Tests (2006, 2009) & Cheonan incident

On October 9th, 2006, North Korea tested a nuclear device for the first time, eliciting international condemnations and prompting UN economic sanctions. Six-party negotiations attempted to defuse tensions with an agreement in 2007, which contained the terms that North Korea was to give up its nuclear program in exchange for provision of heavy fuel oil. North Korea conceded, shutting down its Yongbyon nuclear plant. However, suspension was short-lived as the newly elected South Korean President Lee vowed to take a stronger stance against North Korea. In April 2009, the regime launched a rocket which it claimed to be carrying a satellite. The UNSC condemned the act, as many nations saw it as an ICBM test. North Korea declared its withdrawal from the six-party talks while resuming activities at the Yongbyon reactor and conducting its second nuclear test on May 25th.

On March 26th, 2010, an explosion caused a South Korean warship, Cheonan, to sink near the maritime border between the two Koreas. On April 22nd, a South Korean military intelligence report leaked to the public stated that the ship was deliberately attacked by the North Korean navy, leading to the configuration of a multinational investigative team. On May 20th, the released report stated that the only plausible explanation was that it had been torpedoed by a North Korean submarine, causing a ripple of panic in the South Korean population and escalating tension between the Koreas and their allies. On August 5th, South Korea conducted a massive antisubmarine military exercise in the Yellow Sea, which the North Korean government branded as an “invasion”. On November 23rd, North Korea launched an artillery attack on the South Korean island of Yongpyeong, killing 2 marines and civilians, while injuring over a few dozen. Meanwhile, IAEA expressed concerns over reports that North Korea had succeeded in building an uranium enrichment plant, which differed from their previous plutonium-based weapons.

Continued Nuclear Tests (2013, 2016, 2017) & Recent Developments

On December 2011, North Korea's Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il died, succeeded by his son and current leader Kim Jon-un. On February 23rd 2012, United States and North Korea met in Beijing to discuss the latter's nuclear program with aims to restart six-party talks. On February 29th, North Korea indicated its willingness to relinquish its nuclear arms program in exchange for resumption of food aid from the United States, only to announce two weeks later of its intentions to launch a satellite into space for scientific and "celebratory" purposes, which was condemned by the US, Japan and South Korea as an act of deliberate provocation. After the launch, United States announced its cancellation of its prior plans to subsidize them with food aid. However, despite such international pressure, North Korea refused to relent, conducting its third nuclear weapons test on February. UNSC strongly condemned the act and approved another round of sanctions, for which even DPRK's sole ally China declared its support.

On January 2016, North Korea carried out its third nuclear test. Relationships further deteriorated after it launched a missile rocket in February, which it claimed was a satellite launch, an explanation dismissed by many international observers. South Korea responded by halting all operations in the Kaesong Industrial Park, where Southern companies had been employing Northern workers in its facilities. On March 2nd, UNSC imposed new sanctions that included the complete ban on North Korean coal exports, estimated to worth about \$1bn and issued mandatory inspections of all North Korean cargo planes and ships traveling internationally. It also blocked all sales of rocket and plane fuels to North Korea.

However, unvanquished, DPRK retaliated by launching another ballistic missile into waters controlled by Japan in August, which the administration characterized as an act of self-defense against the threat of a continued US presence in South Korea. Following in September, North Korea carried out its 5th nuclear test, to which South Korea responded by deploying THAAD in its southern territories, despite strong objections from Russia and China who feared that the instrument could be applied against them in the future.

On September 3rd 2017, North Korea announced that it tested a miniaturized hydrogen bomb that could be loaded on a ballistic missile, evidenced by seismic reading of 6.3 that indicated that the test was bigger and much more destructive than any previous tests. Subsequently, on September 12th, UNSC adopted new sanctions, banning companies from selling technology or products that could be utilized by North Korea's missile and nuclear programs while imposing economic sanctions including bans on textile and restrictions on oil products.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, also referred to as North Korea, is a self-proclaimed socialist state, while others have characterized it as a totalitarian regime and a dictatorship. Since its creation, North Korea has been governed under the Kim dynasty, officially known as the Mount Paektu

Bloodline. Since the commencement of their hostile and nuclear activities against South Korea and its allies, the “hermit kingdom” has long been condemned and isolated from the international community.

Republic of Korea (ROK)

The Republic of Korea, commonly known as South Korea, constitutes the southern portion of the peninsula, bordered by North Korea at the DMZ.

United States

The United States has been heavily involved in the conflict as a close historical and military ally of the Republic of Korea. The United States government currently holds a nuclear umbrella policy over South Korea and Japan against North Korean hostilities.

China

China has traditionally been North Korea’s closet ally. Over the past decades, it has supplied a large and essential portion of North Korea’s nuclear and economic resources and was always the first to stop short of the ban on exports and imports ordered by the UN sanctions. The reason behind China’s alliance to North Korea is due to the political and social ties it shares, its rivalry with United States and also the fear that once the North Korea begins to unravel, a massive influx of refugees will overwhelm the bordering Chinese territories. However, recent trends indicate that Beijing is perhaps getting exasperated by the regime’s continuous missile and nuclear threats, as shown from its halt of all textiles and oil exports of Pyongyang in adherence to the UN sanctions.

Russia

Prior to the collapse of communism, the Soviet Union has maintained a close relationship with North Korea throughout the decades as a strong opponent of the United States and its political ideologies. However, since the creation of the Russian government, Moscow has slightly shifted its position on the current conflict. In most cases, the Russian government denounces DPRK’s nuclear program and threats, while also criticizing South Korea and its Western allies for alienating North Korea through its harsh sanctions. For example, last year, after Pyongyang threatened to “annihilate” the US and South Korean territories, Russia warned that if North Korea continues its nuclear threats, it could potentially lead to military force used against its people. However, many experts view such Russian comments as generic warnings rather than promise of Russian intervention. In fact, Moscow had also taken the opportunity to criticize a joint US-South Korea military exercise which supposedly put “unprecedented military and political pressure on Pyongyang”.

Japan

Japan is currently one of United States’ closet ally in East Asia and a strong adversary of the North Korean regime. The two governments have clashed over the issues of abudctions of foreign nationals, nuclear programs, etc. However, Japan is also at conflict with South Korea on territorial

disputes over the Liancourt Rocks and cultural issues such as the comfort women exploited by the Japanese military during WWII.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an international organization that works in close cooperation with the United Nations to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to prevent the abuse of the technology as weapons of mass destruction.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
August 15th 1945	Japanese occupation of Korea ends
December 27th 1945	Moscow Conference
August 15th 1948	South Korea declares its independence
September 9th, 1948	DPRK proclaimed, Kim Il-Sung installed as leader; Soviet troops withdraw
June 25th 1950	North Korea invades South Korea, marking the start of the Korean War
July 27th 1953	Korean Armistice Agreement signed, instituting a ceasefire and creating the DMZ
1960s	South Korea's rapid industrial development
December 12th 1985	North Korea joins the NPT
September 17th, 1991	United Nations membership granted to DPRK and ROK
February 9th 1993	IAEA accuses North Korea for violating the NPT and demanded the access to its nuclear waste storage sites, which the administration responded by threatening to quit the NPT
October 1994	North Korea and US signs an Agreed Framework under which Pyongyang commits to freezing its nuclear program in return for heavy fuel and two light-water nuclear reactors.
June 2000	Landmark inter-Korean meeting takes place between Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il and President Kim Dea-jung
January 2002	US president George Bush labels North Korea, Iraq and Iran as "axis of evil"
October 2002	US, Japan and South Korea halt oil shipments over reports that North Korea has been secretly developing a nuclear program
December 2002	North Korea announces its reactivation of Yongbyon facilities and expels all UN inspectors
January 2003	North Korea withdraws from NPT, marking the beginning of the six-party talks

May 2003	North Korea withdraws from 1992 agreement with South Korea to keep the Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons
February 2005	North Korea publicly announces for the first time that it is developing nuclear weapons for “self-defense”
July & October 2006	North Korea’s carries out missile and its first nuclear weapons test, prompting UN economic sanctions
July 2007	North Korea shuts down parts of Yongbyon reactor after receiving fuel and oil package from United States
October 2007	Second inter-Korean summit held in Pyongyang
October 2008	North Korea agrees to provide full access to Yongbyon nuclear site after US removes it from their terrorism blacklist.
January 2009	North Korea announces that it is scrapping all military and political deals with the South, accusing it of “hostile intent”
May 25th 2009	North Korea declares its withdrawal from the six-party talks and conducts its second nuclear test
March 2010	North Korea sinks South Korean warship Cheonan
December 2011	Kim Jong-il dies, son Kim Jong-un succeeds as North Korea’s new Supreme Leader
February 2013	North Korea conducts its third nuclear test
September 2013	Sole ally China bans export to North Korea a list of items that could be applied to manufacture of missiles or any weapons of mass destruction
January 2016	North Korea announces its first hydrogen bomb test which is met with widespread skepticism
September 2016	North Korea's 5th nuclear test
August 2017	North Korea threatens to fire ballistic missile near US Pacific territory of Guam
September 3rd, 2017	North Korea carries out its 6th nuclear test

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea, 27 June 1950 (**S/RES/83**)
- New Members: DPR of Korea / R. of Korea, 8 August 1991 (**S/RES/702**)
- Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 11 May 1993 (**S/RES/825**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 14 October 2006 (**S/RES/1718**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 12 June 2009 (**S/RES/1874**)
- Maintenance of international peace and security: Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, 24 September 2009 (**S/RES/1887**)

- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 7 June 2010 (**S/RES/1928**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 10 June 2011 (**S/RES/1985**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 12 June 2012 (**S/RES/2050**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 7 March 2013 (**S/RES/2094**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 5 March 2014 (**S/RES/2141**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 4 March 2015 (**S/RES/2207**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 30 November 2016 (**S/RES/2321**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 5 August 2017 (**S/RES/2371**)
- Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 11 September 2017 (**S/RES/2375**)

Main Issues

Heavy Militarization

North Korea's current militarization status is not clearly known. According to United States intelligence, supposedly, it is equipped with hundreds of ballistic missiles whose accuracies are still unclear; however, what is known for sure is that the regime currently has missiles stationed at firing range of Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. The Pyongyang government has also presented numerous claims that it has successfully "miniaturized" nuclear weapons that would fit on a ballistic missile, but international experts have long cast doubts on these claims. Yet, on August 2017, intelligence leaked to the Washington Post stated that US intelligence officials now do believe that North Korea is capable of miniaturization.

The weapons yield from North Korea's most recent nuclear test in September 2017 was measured to be around 160 kilotons, a significant improvement from any of its previous tests. The measurements indicate that it is most likely a hydrogen bomb. North Korea has also proposed claims that they have succeeded in developing ICBMs that could carry the miniaturized bombs to mainland America; however, experts have casted doubts and skepticism on this.

Meanwhile, it isn't only North Korea's nuclear capacities that have contributed to the rise of tension in the region. Heavy militarization of the United States, China and the Republic of Korea has often led to exacerbation of the conflict. Currently, it is known that both US and China are equipped with nuclear-armed aircrafts, ICBMs, IRBMs, MRBMs and SRBMs. Previously, South Korea had maintained a covert nuclear weapons program that was halted in 1975 after negotiations with the US. Nevertheless, currently, the ROK is currently possesses a heavily equipped military, which is reported to be one of the largest standing army in the world. Japan, who although unlikely to start a nuclear weapon program in

the future, is known to be equipped with all the technology and materials necessary to rapidly acquire them. Currently, it has been publicized that the Japanese government harnesses a domestic stockpile of 44 tons of plutonium.

To seek demilitarization in the region, but mostly targeting North Korea, the United States, ROK, Japan and its Western allies have taken several approaches, ranging from appeasement to imposing forceful sanctions and applying international pressure. They are further evaluated under 'previous attempts to solve the issue'.

Division in alliances

The military alliance between United States and ROK has existed since hostilities from North Korea began. The two has cooperated throughout the ages as historical allies and close economic trade partners. However, many have raised the criticism that perhaps the division in the alliance between the two states have led to the failures in appropriately dealing with the North Korean regime, and such are due to:

Domestic disagreements & debates

Ever since its involvement in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States has expressed its reluctance to use military force in dealing with the problems in the Korean peninsula. This led to the lack of decisiveness that the United States showed during the six-party talks. More recently, over the past few years, the US has taken a more aggressive and forceful stance by stationing an increased amount of troops and military equipment in South Korea and imposing severe sanctions against the North Korean regime. However, the previous US foreign policies are now challenged by the new administration whose arbitrary attitudes and demands towards ROK and DPRK pose difficulties in dealing cooperatively through the current predicament.

On the other hand, with the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye and the rapid political and social changes it underwent as a nation, South Korea is confronted with new hurdles to overcome. The new administration has to garner domestic political consensus and establish a stable financial base in order to provide for a new foreign policy toward North Korea. Opinions on orientation of policies also vary across the political spectrum. Many South Korean politicians advocate for pro-US stances such as harsh sanctions and forceful and firmer reactions while others advocate for more peaceful methods such as negotiations and bargaining.

Imbalance of the Alliance

Although bonded together by a close military alliance and economic relationships, United States and ROK has often diverged on the strategies dealing with North Korea. For example, previously in 1993 during the ROK-US summit, President Kim Young Sam criticized US for failing to maintain South Korea's confidence, expressing dissatisfaction of "the US merely information already 'decided' policies to South Korea". In 2003, while the US demanded a hardline policy against North Korea who President Bush labeled the regime as an "axis of evil", the South

Korean government advocated for a more prudent and pacified approach. More recently, differences between the two countries have been further emphasized. For example, there was a huge debate over THAAD deployment where although the ROK government had agreed to US' offer, its citizens strongly contested the decision. Moreover, the newly inaugurated President Moon Jae In expressed hopes that the conflict will be solved through peaceful discussions and negotiations, while bluntly criticizing the aggressiveness that the United States has displayed recently.

Problems with Reunification

Although it seems far-fetched to discuss problems with reunification considering the current trends, it is still an important aspect of the issue at hand. The ultimate goal of this process is to ensure that in the end, a permanent peace is installed between the two countries, and if the means justify the ends, reunification seems to be the solution.

North Korea has consistently posed threats that it will use military force in order to reunify the territories, whereas South Korea has called for a more gradual and peaceful process. On the other hand, outside observers anticipate the occasion to come more violently and sudden, similar to German unification in 1989.

The major problems with reunification are the vast political and economic differences between the two states. Neither administration is willing to surrender power, which explains for why reunification has never been genuinely pursued, even if both sides publicly advocated for the notion. In terms of economies, it is predicted that initially, reunification will have a greatly detrimental effect on South Korea who will need to provide a significant amount of subsidies to develop the North's infrastructures and industries. However, others have claimed that reunification on the long run would ultimately be beneficial for the South Korean economy who would acquire unprecedented access to resources, ports, etc.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Failures of the six party talks

The six party talks were first introduced after North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT. It sought to find a peaceful solution to the conflict through disarmament of the North Korean regime; however, overall, the five rounds of talks that took place from 2003 to 2007 failed to bring much positive results. North Korea only exploited the situation to squeeze out concessions from the US such as time and resources to continue developing its nuclear weapons program, while giving nothing substantial away themselves. In fact, at the conference table, Pyongyang held most of the cards. China was too afraid to put pressure on North Korea's fragile economy out of fears that it could trigger an influx of refugees into their own territories, while the United States was unwilling to apply military action as they did not wish to chase away North Korea from the negotiations. Therefore, whenever United States or South Korea refused to provide them with certain financial or food aid, North Korea carried arbitrary and

petulant acts of provocation such as nuclear or missile tests in order to coerce the concessions. It did agree at the third and fourth rounds of talks to shut down its nuclear operators, but only to resume its activities few years later to acquire more subsidies.

Why the UN sanctions won't work

Seeing the failures of the six-party talks, the US and ROK decided to change its strategy with a more forceful and harsh attitude, and such were the economic and financial sanctions. Although the sanctions proved to be slightly more effective than the six-party talks, there were still limitations to it that allowed North Korea to continue its nuclear weapons program.

For example, North Korea's secret economy hidden from the radar of international monitors enables its evasion of the sanctions, as Ri Jong Ho, a previous senior official at Office 39 – a secretive cabinet that operated slush funds for the country's leaders – corroborated. He revealed that North Korea has procured Russia-produced fuel from brokers in Singapore and others since the 1990s, and have used names of Chinese and Russian contacts to open bank accounts to access international markets on several occasions. A recent investigation conducted by the US research group C4ADS claims to have found evidence of North Korea's undisclosed economic activities. It reported that the Dandong Hongxiang industrial Development (DHID), a Chinese company, has allegedly been supporting North Korea's nuclear program through trading on its behalf via 43 business entities across four continents, leading to sanctions implemented by the US and China. North Korea has also been able to generate revenues over the years by operating a sophisticated web of overseas smuggling and hacking, sales of military equipment, drug trafficking, printing counterfeit currency and cybercrime.

Reunion of the Divided Families

Over the past years, a total of 20 reunions between family members separated by the Korean War and the 38th parallel have taken place, organized by the administration of the two countries. The first reunion was organized in 2000 after the historic inter-Korea meeting, while the last one took place in October 2015 at Mount Kumgang resort in North Korea. Such events were generally regarded as conciliatory attempts between the two states and unfortunately, the closest they have gotten to reunification; however, the reunions have been inconsistent and hugely dependent on the relationships between the two countries at that moment in time. For example, the reunions which were taking place annually from 2000, was temporarily halted in 2008 when South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak decided to stop the unconditional aid and to take up a hardline policy towards North Korea. The reunions have also been absent in 2016 and 2017 as tensions between the two states have reached its pinnacle.

Possible Solutions

It is vital that one realizes that the conflict isn't one-sided. North Korea is often easily branded as the aggressor, which is natural considering its hostile behaviors and repeated violations of several UNSC resolutions. However, one should also consider all the other factors such as the history, the flaws of the

United Nations, United States, etc. Please keep in mind that the aspects of the topic or the solutions are in no way limited by the content of this report.

- Demilitarization
- increasing solidarity and finding consensus of the international community
- providing for the loopholes of the currently implemented sanctions
- anticipating Korean reunification

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Appendix

South and North Korea’s Views on the Unification of the Korean Peninsula and Inter-Korean Relations - <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Park-Young-Ho-paper.pdf>>

Joint Statement (1972) - [http://www2.law.columbia.edu/course_00S_L9436_001/
North%20Korea%20materials/74js-en.htm](http://www2.law.columbia.edu/course_00S_L9436_001/North%20Korea%20materials/74js-en.htm)>

Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges and Cooperation (1990) - [http://
peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/
KR%20KP_911213_Agreement%20on%20reconciliation%20non%20aggression%20and%20exchanges
pdf.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KR%20KP_911213_Agreement%20on%20reconciliation%20non%20aggression%20and%20exchanges.pdf.pdf)>

Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (1990) - [http://www.nti.org/media/
pdfs/aptkoreanuc.pdf](http://www.nti.org/media/pdfs/aptkoreanuc.pdf)>

Moscow Conference (1945) - <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000003-1341.pdf>>