



Security Council, PRAMUN 2017 Synopsis

Topic #1: The question of the DPRK in the wake of their latest nuclear tests

I. Background Information

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) is a small country in East Asia, occupying the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. It has a population of about 25 million and has been under a totalitarian leadership since 1948.

North Korea is by no means an ordinary nation. To understand how it became such a bizarre nation on the world stage, one must first get some sense of its modern history.

First, it is important to note that there weren't always two Koreas. A single "Korea" existed as a unified state in some form as far back as 668 AD¹. Since then and throughout the ages, Korea enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence, being under different levels of imperial Chinese or Mongol influence, but also enjoying widely accepted political independence for most of that time.

That all changed in 1905. In that year, the neighbouring Empire of Japan waged a short – but by no accounts minor – war against Russia. And it won. Encouraged by its triumph over a major European power, Japan started dreaming about a global empire of its own. And so, over the next couple of years, Japan annexed Korea (1910²), Manchuria (1931³) and then, after entering World War 2, Japan continued conquering land further up China and beyond.

Even after the war had ended and Japan was defeated, Korea did not have peace. As the cold war was looming, Korea turned out to be one of the political battlegrounds of how the post-war world order should look like. The USA wanted to make it a democracy. The Soviet Union wanted Korea to be a communist state.

And so, the country was divided into a northern area, protected by the Soviets, and a southern area protected primarily by the United States. In 1948, when the powers failed to agree on the formation of a single government, this partition became the basis for the modern states of North and South Korea.

While officially ruled by a communist party, the official ideology of the DPRK is called "Juche" and is a unique blend of communism and Japanese-style fascism. The long totalitarian rule made the country increasingly isolated over the years, and it became less and less developed economically, especially compared to the booming south.

This economic downfall had even led to food shortages and widespread famine in the past.⁴ Still, to assert its position on the global stage, the North Korean government is willing to put military first and has decided to push for development of a nuclear programme, to deter possible invaders. This had been denounced by most countries and is a source of numerous crises ever since.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Later_Silla

² <https://web.archive.org/web/20070211234114/http://www.isop.ucla.edu/eas/documents/kore1910.htm>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchukuo>

⁴ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/united-nations-north-korea-food-security-worsening/>

II. United Nations Involvement

The United Nations takes the nuclear threat very seriously and is committed to reducing the nuclear threat in the world. The key document to achieve this goal is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT. The treaty was drafted in 1968 in a joint effort by the West, led by the USA and the East, led by the USSR, to reduce the number of nuclear warheads in the world, as well as to limit the number of countries possessing them.

At the time, the nuclear arms race was increasingly heated and expensive for both sides and there were predictions of 25–30 nuclear weapon states within 20 years. Instead, over forty years later, five states are not parties to the NPT, and they include the only four additional states believed to possess nuclear weapons.⁵ Because of this, the NPT is generally considered a success.

Originally, there was a time when nuclear proliferation by North Korea was not considered a problem. North Korea had signed the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty and it was generally regarded that it did not have the capacity to develop nuclear weapons.

But then something changed. In January 2013, North Korea withdrew from the NPT⁶ after detonating its first successful locally developed nuclear bomb. This has led to a unilateral denouncement of North Korea by the UN, eventually leading to sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council⁷, Most recently by the Resolution 2270⁸, supported by all the Security Council members.

III. Bloc Positions and Possible Solutions

Generally, there is no one really supporting North Korea in this issue. However, there are countries that tend to be less harsh when it comes to condemning its actions. Historically, China was defending DPRK on UN grounds, and still is sometimes defending it in economically life-saving measures⁹. However, even China is wary of the nuclear problem and the tests are making it uncomfortable to say the least, so sometimes, it is even China to call out DPRK on its actions.¹⁰

China and Russia abide by a simple rule – that it should not be interfered with countries internal issues in any way. In other words, they would veto anything even remotely suggesting an operation inside DPRK's borders.

The Western countries on the other hand are very critical of Korea's nuclear programme and are willing to impose more measures to shut it down, even if it means denying food aid to North Korean people.

⁵ https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004_11/BookReview

⁶ https://web.archive.org/web/20130311220936/http://dtirp.dtra.mil/pdfs/npt_status_2009.pdf

⁷ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc10934.doc.htm>

⁸ [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2270\(2016\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2270(2016))

⁹ <http://fortune.com/2016/10/11/china-north-korea-coal/>

¹⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-wangyi-korea-usa-idUSKCN0VL15S>

IV. Sources and Useful Links

CIA World Factbook – North Korea

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>

Thomson Reuters – Nuclear weapons tests 1945-2013 overview: An interactive graphic

<http://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/rngs/1/463/593/index.html>

New York Times – All individual nuclear tests in North Korea compared

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/10/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-weapons-tests.html>

NBC News – Overview of the situation after the latest North Korean test

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korea-nuclear-test-what-you-need-know-n645431>

BBC News – North Korea's nuclear programme: How advanced is it?

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11813699>

Oxford Research Group - North Korea: Problems, Perceptions and Proposals

http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/books/north_korea_problems_perceptions_and_proposals

Relevant and interesting articles that are worth reading / videos to watch (not to be cited as Policy Paper sources, as the sources are usually biased):

Vice News – North Korea's Nuclear Threat: Interview with Victor Cha

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVWyWKdhS5s>

Vox – North Korea: Explained

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM6rliphNdw>

A YouTube video describing the Korean War and why Korea split

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0E9Kel8BtE>

Vice News – “Inside North Korea” Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24R8JObNNQ4>

Just for fun – The viral video about the history of Japan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh5LY4Mz15o>