

Background Guide Topic Three:
Improving relations in the Korean peninsula

Introduction

In 1953, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, and the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) signed an cease-fire to end a four year long engagement that claimed over 3 million lives.¹ However, while the Korean War was effectively over, the tensions between the North and the South, as well as the North and the rest of the world would continue on into the 21st century. Reunification efforts, the growing North Korean nuclear missile program, and economic policy are among the key issues on the agenda of Korean Peninsula internal and external relations with states such as the "United States and Japan worry[ing] about the isolated country's [meaning North Korea's] long-range missile development" and "South Korea and China fear[ing] the economic implications of the collapse of Kim Jong-Il's regime."² Furthermore, isolated incidents such as the July 2008 shooting of a South Korean tourist by a North Korean soldier and the March 2010 North Korea firing upon the South Korean warship *Cheonan*, have done little to improve or solidify North-South relations.

While North-South summits and Six-Party Talks did work in improving North-South dealings in the late 1990s and early 2000s and bettering North Korea's relations with international actors such as the United States, Russia, China, and Japan (though China has remained a steadfast ally to DPRK since its establishment at the end of World War II) throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, these talks and summits have reached a virtual standstill as North Korea has reimplemented its nuclear weapons research and testing since April 2009 to the dismay of the international community.³

History

The Korean Peninsula is no stranger to external invasion. Whether it was by the Mongols in the 13th and 14th centuries, the Japanese in the 16th century, or the Chinese and the Japanese in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Korean Peninsula was very familiar with foreign control and influence (though it did enjoy a brief period as the "Hermit Kingdom" under a closed-door policy in the mid-1800s).⁴ In 1910, Korea was annexed by Japan and subjected to stringent colonial rule. However, after Japan was defeated in 1945 along with the other Axis Powers in World War II, the Allied Powers divided Korea

¹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

² http://www.cfr.org/publication/11954/crisis_guide.html

³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

along the 38th parallel, much like they did Germany. The northern region was under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union, while the southern region was under the jurisdiction of the United States until further arrangements could be made. However, “initial hopes for a unified, independent Korea quickly evaporated as the politics of the Cold War...resulted in the 1948 establishment of two separate nations with diametrically opposed political, economical, and social systems.”⁵ Thus, the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) were founded and the era of a divided Korean Peninsula began.

Then, on June 25, 1950, North Korea opened fire on South Korean forces stationed at the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. The initial attack came as a surprise to South Korean forces, though North Korea falsely claimed that South Korea had made the first move by attacking North Korean forces in the Haeju area of the Ongjin Peninsula.⁶ The resulting Korean War lasted four years, engaged forces from 16 United Nations (UN) member states, and resulted in a death toll of well over three million for both sides.^{7,8} However, while the armistice reached among the United States, the Peoples’ Republic of China, and North Korea effectively ended the war, the strong political, economic, and social tensions between the North and South, and North Korea and much of the rest of the world remained.

Efforts to improve relations between North and South Korea can be divided into a number of stages categorized by the “cycle of warming and cooling of relations” between the two states.⁹ The first stage began in August 1971 when talks fostered by the Red Cross united the North-South goal to reunite Korean families that had been separated as a result of the 38th parallel agreement and the Korean War. These talks were then succeeded by the agreement to “work toward peaceful reunification and an end to the hostile atmosphere prevailing on the peninsula” in 1972, followed by official visits and communications between the North and the South until 1973 when South Korea sought to enter into the UN as its own entity.¹⁰ The second and third stages in North-South relations are categorized by the North’s “delivery of relief goods to South Korea after a typhoon caused devastating floods in 1984,” which resulted in talks on economic and trade policy on the Peninsula, and the “exchange of home

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

⁶ <http://www.korean-war.com/TimeLine/1950/06-25to08-03-50.html>

⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

⁸ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

⁹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

visits and performing artists in 1985.”¹¹ However, these talks and visits were soon suspended due to North Korea’s disapproval of South Korea’s blossoming relationship with the United States. The next stage of Korean affairs is largely attributed to the *Nordpolitik* policy under South Korean President, Roh Tae-Woo. This policy’s aim was for South Korea to strengthen ties with North Korea by promoting a normalization of relations between China, the Soviet Union, and South Korea.¹² Roh also “called for new efforts to promote North-South exchanges, family reunification, inter-Korean trade, and contact in international forums” and even proposed “to discuss security matters with the North.”¹³

Largely due to Roh’s efforts, North and South Korea began meeting in the early 1990’s and reached the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges, and Cooperation (also known as the “Basic Agreement”) in 1991 and the Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (also known as the “Joint Declaration”) in 1992. The “Basic Agreement” effectively acknowledged the common goal of reunification between the two states while the “Joint Declaration” aimed to mitigate and lessen the impact and influence of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons programs on the Peninsula by forbidding both the North and the South from “testing, manufacturing, producing, receiving, possessing, storing, deploying, or using nuclear weapons and [by forbidding] the possession of nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities.”^{14,15} However, the latter agreement would prove to be a difficult policy for North Korea to uphold.

Though the North signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, and the “nuclear safeguards agreement” under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1992, the issues with North Korea and its fast-growing nuclear weapons program can be traced back to 1993 after it turned away IAEA inspectors at two of its nuclear wastes facilities and subsequently withdrew itself from the NPT. Consequent unilateral talks with the United States ensued, resulting in the 1994 Agreed Framework, whereby:

- North Korea agreed to freeze its existing nuclear program and allow monitoring by the IAEA.
- Both sides agreed to cooperate to replace the D.P.R.K.'s graphite-moderated reactors with light-water reactor (LWR) power plants, by a target date of 2003, to be financed and supplied by an

¹¹ <http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/80.htm>

¹² <http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/77.htm>

¹³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

international consortium (later identified as the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization or KEDO).

-As an interim measure, the United States agreed to provide North Korea with 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil annually until the first reactor was built.

-The United States and D.P.R.K. agreed to work together to store safely the spent fuel from the five-megawatt reactor and dispose of it in a safe manner that did not involve reprocessing in the D.P.R.K.

-The two sides agreed to move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.

-The two sides agreed to work together for peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

-The two sides agreed to work together to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.¹⁶

On the front of North-South relations, South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung's "Sunshine Policy,"—instated in 1998—towards the North with key points such as "no tolerance of provocations from the North, no intention to absorb the North, and the separation of political cooperation from economic cooperation," paved the way for improved economic ties between the two states and established inter-Korean summits to discuss these bettered relations (though they were tainted by allegations of a pay-off between the South and the North).¹⁷ However, relations between the two states once again came to a standstill after several South Korean sailors were killed in an engagement with the North Korean navy in the Yellow Sea in 2002.¹⁸

Then, in 2003, a number of developments defining Korean Peninsula relations occurred. North Korea agreed to Three-Party talks with the United States and China, and later that year, the first of a series of Six-Party Talks with the United States, China, South Korea, Russia, and Japan with the aim at reaching a nuclear disarmament agreement (chiefly between the United States and Korea) among the Six-Party states.¹⁹ These talks would continue through 2008, making slow, yet substantial progress on the North Korean denuclearization front. However, in April 2009, significant events detrimental to the continuation of the Six-Party talks led to their suspension to this day.²⁰

¹⁶ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

¹⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

¹⁸ http://www.cfr.org/publication/11954/crisis_guide.html

¹⁹ http://www.cfr.org/publication/11954/crisis_guide.html

²⁰ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

Current Situation

The late 20th and early 21st centuries marked a brief period of success in North Korean denuclearization and disarmament with agreements and negotiations such as the Agreed Framework agreement between the United States (US) and North Korea in 1994 (where the United States agreed to ease economic sanctions on North Korea while North Korea agreed to “freeze its existing nuclear program and allow monitoring by the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]” among other concessions), the KEDO-DPRK Supply Agreement between the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in 1995 (where KEDO agreed to supply light water reactors (LWRs) for the purpose of energy development to North Korea given that the state develop its energy program within the appropriate nuclear regulations and standards), the Agreed Framework Implementation Talks between the U.S. and DPRK in 2000, and a series of Six-Party Talks between the United States, DPRK, Republic of Korea (South Korea), China, Japan, and Russia that extended from late 2003 to mid-2008.^{21,22} However, this same period was plagued with inconsistent commitment on the part of North Korea towards these set policies, as the DPRK continuously reverted back to enriching and extracting materials, such as uranium and plutonium, used in nuclear weapons assembly, and frequently refused to honor inspections by the IAEA.²³

In 2002, North Korea not only openly acknowledged the possession of “a covert program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons,” but also asserted its right to do so to the dismay of the international community, including the United States, who immediately stated that “North Korea would have to terminate the program before any further progress could be made in U.S.-D.P.R.K. relations.”^{24,25} Shortly after, the DPRK reactivated its nuclear facilities working with plutonium in Yongbyon, expelled all remaining IAEA inspectors within the state, and withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in early 2003.^{26,27} Following North Korea’s withdrawal from the NPT, the United States proposed to engage in multilateral talks with North Korea concerning its nuclear agenda, and while North Korea was reluctant to engage in talks at first, it eventually agreed to enter into Three-

²¹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

²² http://www.kedo.org/lwr_overview.asp

²³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

²⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

²⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

²⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2644593.stm>

²⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

Party Talks with the United States and its closest ally, China, in Beijing. Later that year, North Korea finally agreed to participate in Six-Party Talks with the United States, China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia where it committed to “the eventual elimination of its nuclear programs if the United States was first willing to sign a bilateral ‘non-aggression treaty’ and meet various other conditions, including the provision of substantial amounts of aid and normalization of relations.”²⁸ While the US did not agree to these initial demands, significant progress towards reaching an agreement on the nuclear issue was made in the following Six-Party Talks, until the DPRK announced that it would be suspending its participation in the Six-Party Talks, ending its “moratorium on ballistic missile launches,” and declaring itself to be a nuclear weapons state in 2005. The United States and other Six-Party Talk members soon pushed North Korea to agree to another round of Six-Party Talks shortly after this setback, and the Joint Statement of Principles entered into effect in September 2005 where North Korea “committed to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and to return, at an early date, to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards.”²⁹ These concessions were made under the understanding that other parties to the Six-Party Talks were to supply energy assistance and work with North Korea economically while the United States agreed to take the necessary steps towards normalization of US-DPRK relations—though this policy quickly fell apart as North Korea once again refused to participate in another round of Six-Party Talks.³⁰

Then, in mid-2006, following several DPRK ballistic missile launches, the United Nations (UN) Security Council passed Resolution 1695, which:

...explicitly condemn[ed] the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear weapons program...[and demanded] that the DPRK cut back in its missile launches.... [while banning] all member states from transactions with North Korea involving material, technology or financial resources transfer connected to DPRK’s missiles or weapons of mass destruction programs.³¹

North Korea soon retaliated on October 9, 2006, when it announced that it had successfully completed its first nuclear test.³² The UN responded with Resolution 1718, which imposed new sanctions on the DPRK and demanded “the freezing of North Korea’s financial assets with the exception of funds

²⁸ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

²⁹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

³⁰ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

³¹ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/north-korea.html>

³² http://www.cfr.org/publication/11954/crisis_guide.html

necessary to meet basic needs.”³³

Six-Party Talks among the US, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and North Korea recommenced in December 2006 with an agreement on “Initial Actions for Implementation of the Joint Statement” being reached in early 2007. Other developments throughout the following years included North Korea shutting down several nuclear facilities and reactors in 2007 and the US rescinding the Trading with the Enemy Act and label of North Korea as a “state sponsor of terrorism” in 2008.³⁴

However, on April 2, 2009, North Korea “launched a Taepo Dong-2 missile over the Sea of Japan, in violation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1718...prompt[ing] the UN Security Council to issue a unanimous Presidential Statement condemning the launch,...demanding that the D.P.R.K. refrain from further launches, and calling upon the D.P.R.K. and all member states to fully implement their obligations under UNSCR 1718.”³⁵ However, North Korea quickly denounced the Presidential Statement, ended its participation with the Six-Party Talks, called for the removal of all UN inspectors, and on May 25, 2009 tested its second nuclear warhead. Two days later North Korea announced the cutting of ties with the South, and in June 2009, Resolution 1874, extending the conditions of UNSCR 1718, was adopted by the United Nations.^{36,37}

To date, Six-Party Talks have yet to resume amongst the US, North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia, however the Council on Foreign Relations special task force on the Korean Peninsula released a report in mid-2010 stating that “the danger posed by North Korea is sufficiently severe, and the costs of inaction and acquiescence is so high, that the United States and its partners must continue to press for denuclearization.”³⁸

Directive

While the armistice signed between the United States of America, the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea (North Korea), and the Peoples’ Republic of China on July 27, 1953 effectively ended the four year long engagement over the control of the Korean Peninsula, tensions remain to this day between

³³ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/north-korea.html>

³⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

³⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

³⁶ <http://thedianerehmsow.org/shows/2010-05-27/rising-tensions-korean-peninsula>

³⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

³⁸ <http://csis.org/blog/new-council-foreign-relations-report-korean-peninsula>

the communist North Korea and the capitalist Republic of Korea (South Korea).³⁹ While both North Korea and South Korea have placed reunification on their list of common goals and efforts by both countries to strengthen their economic ties have been ongoing, a frequent “cycle of warming and cooling of relations” has become commonplace in North-South relations and reunification efforts.⁴⁰ Moreover, recent debate concerning North Korea’s nuclear agenda as added further strain on North Korea’s relations with not only the South, but also with much of the rest of the world. The United States and Japan are among the chief proponents of North Korean denuclearization, while the United Nations (UN) has implemented sanctions against the state since its October 2006 nuclear weapons test.⁴¹

Delegates should be familiar with the basic pre-World War history of the Korean Peninsula, concentrating on the cultural homogeneity of the Korean people before World War II. Delegates should also be familiar with the factors that led to the Korean War, subsequent North-South relations, and key political and economic agreements between the North and the South following the 1953 armistice. Additionally, a comprehensive understanding of foreign relations outside the Korean Peninsula (i.e. concerning allies and opponents in the international arena, as well as the role North and South Korea play in the United Nations) is key in debating this topic, and delegates should come to the committee prepared with firm stances on North Korean denuclearization and North-South reunification.

³⁹ <http://www.korean-war.com/TimeLine/1953/timeline1953.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>

⁴¹ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/north-korea.html>