



BRAMUN2026
Brazil Model United Nations

Study Guide

United Nations Security Council

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LETTER FROM THE DAIS

Dear Delegates,

The Dais of the United Nations Security Council warmly welcomes you to the BRAMUN 2026 conference! We, Maria Paula Perdiz, Artur Silva, and Lorenzo Covre, are honored to serve as your Chairs and look forward to meeting each of you as we navigate the pressing and complex scenarios selected for this year's sessions.

We anticipate that the debates will be lively, insightful, and centered on diplomacy and cooperation among delegations. Delegates are expected to uphold respect toward their peers and the Chairs while following parliamentary procedure. Careful study of the guide provided will help you all prepare effectively and ensure you gain the most from this experience. We encourage all participants, regardless of previous MUN experience, to arrive ready to engage fully in committee sessions.

The Chairs of the Security Council would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude once again for your active participation in the debate and your dedication to making this conference a success. Your participation and preparation are key to making BRAMUN 2026 a meaningful experience for all, and we look forward to the valuable contributions you will all bring. Should you have any questions or require support, please do not hesitate to contact us through the email addresses provided below. We are glad to assist!

Sincerely,

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COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION



Image of the United Nations Security Council in session as delegates raise their hands to vote, with a large mural (untitled) prominently displayed behind them in the chamber.

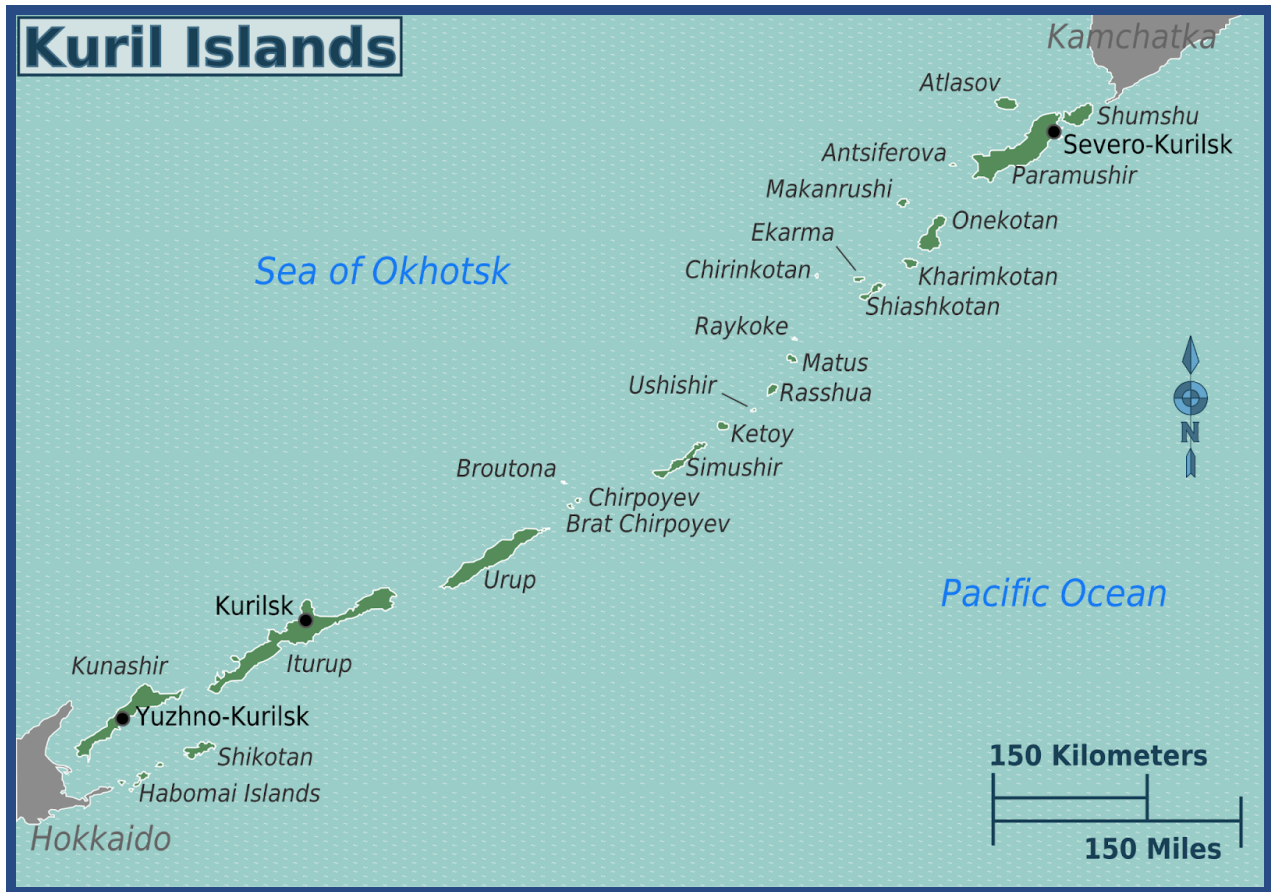
The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six original organs of the UN; it was created in 1945 following WWII to ensure international security and peace, and its headquarters are currently located in New York City, United States. The UNSC is the only organ of the UN that can recommend new member-states to the UN General Assembly, approve changes to the UN Charter, establish peacekeeping operations, enact international sanctions, and authorize military action. In other words, the Security Council is the only committee that can ratify binding resolutions and subject them to UN member states.

The UNSC consists of fifteen members, ten of whom are elected by the General Assembly every two years to guarantee geographic representation. The other five members, also known as the P5, hold a permanent seat in the Security Council and, consequently, tend to be the most influential UN member-states. Consisting of Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and



the United States of America, the P5 are the only member-states to have veto power - the ability to cancel any resolution from being adopted. While potentially useful, such power often causes opposite blocks to veto each other's resolutions, thus leading to none being adopted at all. Therefore, to promote constructive debates, the P5 powers in BRAMUN 2025 will only be able to veto resolutions that infringe upon international law established by the UN charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or other UN-ratified agreements.

Topic A: Resolving the Russo-Japanese Kuril Islands Dispute

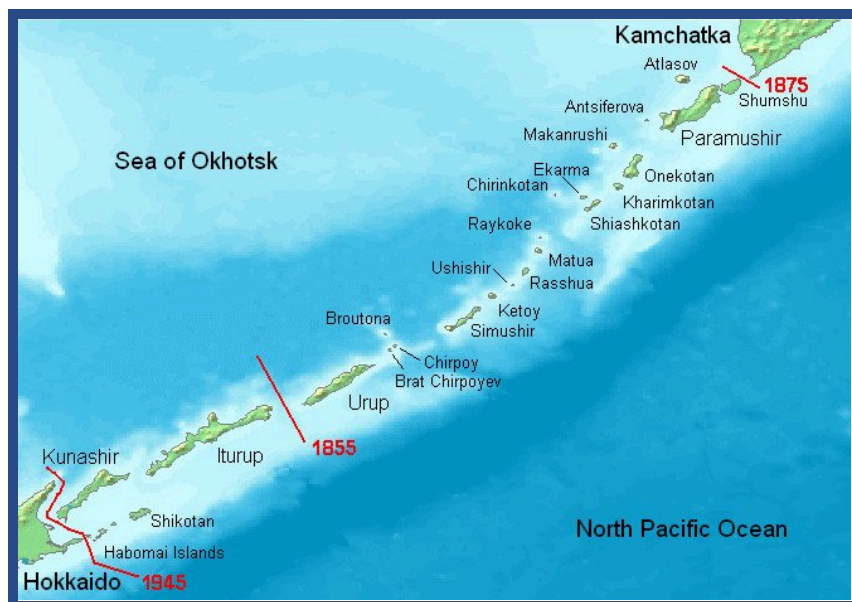


A political map illustrating the Kuril Islands archipelago, located between the Russian Kamchatka peninsula and the Japanese island of Hokkaido.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

The Kuril Islands archipelago is a cluster of islands stretching from the Russian Kamchatka Peninsula to Hokkaido, Japan. The dispute between both nations is primarily centered on the southernmost end of the archipelago, including the Kunashir, Iturup, Shikotan, and Habomai islands, referred to by Japan as the Northern Territories. These islands, traditionally, were of Japanese domain; however, they were seized by the Soviet Union in 1945 following the Japanese surrender after World War II, after which Japanese inhabitants were expelled and replaced by Russians. Japan disputes Russian sovereignty over these territories, claiming that the southernmost islands were not part of the Kuril chain ceded in treaties and thus should be considered sovereign Japanese territory. Apart from the original dispute over land, the islands are especially relevant to Russia's military defense, controlling international access to the Sea of Okhotsk and enabling naval power projection in the North Pacific, while also commanding key maritime routes and rich natural resources coveted by both Russia and Japan.



Historically, the 1855 Treaty of Shimoda delineated borders between Russia and Japan, granting Russia most of the Kuril territory, except for the southernmost islands, which were allocated to Japan. In 1875, Japan and Russia signed the Treaty of Saint Petersburg. Under this treaty, Japan agreed to give up (or “cede”) its claims to Sakhalin Island, allowing Russia to control it entirely. In return, Russia recognized Japan’s full ownership of all the Kuril Islands. This agreement clearly established the border between the Russian and Japanese Empires. Japan and Russia would later go to war in 1904, over competing imperial ambitions in Korea and Manchuria. Japan, threatened by Russia’s eastward expansion and the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, launched a surprise attack on Russia’s Port Arthur. Despite Russia’s larger land area and resources, Japan achieved significant military successes, including a decisive victory at the Battle of Tsushima, which marked a turning point in modern military history. The war would end with the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth, mediated by the then United States (U.S). President, Theodore Roosevelt. Japan gained control of southern Manchuria, the South Manchuria Railway, southern Sakhalin, and dominance over Korea. The conflict as a whole also weakened Russia, contributing to the 1905 Russian Revolution, and established Japan as a major imperial power in East Asia. Later, during WWII, the Cairo and Tehran conferences saw the Allied Powers take decisive action to expel Japan from territories it had previously seized by force. The Yalta Agreement allowed Soviet occupation of the Kurils, though the legal status remained contested. Further on, the San Francisco Peace Treaty from 1951 had Japan renounce its claims over the Kurils, however, without recognizing Soviet sovereignty explicitly. The Soviet Union’s and later Russia’s subsequent control and militarization of the Kuril Islands significantly heightened tensions between both nations, especially since 2015, when Russia started deploying advanced missile systems such as the Soviet-era Tor-M2U surface-to-air missile system to the Northern Territories.

The territorial dispute impedes the formal signing of peace treaties between Russia and Japan to formally end World War II hostilities. The island's strategic importance also draws in regional and global powers such as the United States and China, influencing broader security dynamics in Northeast Asia by generating international and regional political instability due to interest of ownership and economic activity in the area. Several attempts at negotiation, including the 1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration, have failed to resolve this issue, largely due to deeply held national interests and divergent interpretations of history and law. The Russian Federation emphasizes sovereignty based on wartime agreements and postwar control, while the Nation of Japan insists on the return of what it sees as illegally occupied territory.

History

Exploration (17th-18th Century)

The Kurils were initially inhabited by the Ainu, an indigenous group native to northern Japan, primarily originating from the island of Hokkaido. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Japan, emerging from a period of over two centuries of complete isolation from foreign contact, initiated explorations in the northeastern region of Hokkaido, eventually reaching the Kuril archipelago. Simultaneously, the Russian Empire's own settlers and soldiers encroached onto the shores of the Northern Pacific, Sakhalin Island, and the Coral Islands.

First Diplomatic Contact (19th-20th Century)

Diplomatic relations between the Russian Empire and the Tokugawa Shogunate of Japan were first established in the 19th century, primarily to mitigate their conflicting colonial interests of the past years. In 1855, Japan and Russia agreed upon the Treaty of Shimoda, which divided the Kuril Islands in half: the four Southernmost islands—Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai—were ceded to Japan, while the northernmost area was ceded to the Russian Empire. In addition, the compromise also stated that the nearby Sakhalin Island would not be partitioned; however, it would be jointly ruled as a Russo-Japanese co-dominium. In 1875, 20 years later, a new agreement was ratified, superseding the previous provisions established by the 1855 Treaty of Shimoda. The 1875 Treaty of Saint Petersburg gave fruition to a new partition plan, in which Russia would gain complete control of Sakhalin Island in exchange for Japan seizing the entirety of the Kuril Islands archipelago, stretching to the right of the Kamchatka Peninsula on the Russian Mainland.

During the 20th century, the territorial ambitions and goals of Japan and Russia began to contradict each other, initiating a series of escalatory events that would deteriorate the existing diplomatic relations between these nations. The Russian government faced an immense challenge in possessing ports, mainly in the Pacific, that remained ice-free during the winter, locking down their naval and trade capabilities across the coastline for the entire season. Thus, the Russians found themselves in need of expansion, contributing to the expansion towards the warmer waters of Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula. There, after negotiations with the Qing Dynasty, the Russians managed to acquire a lease on Port Arthur in China's Liaodong Peninsula, significantly alleviating their port issues over the winter. However, to Russia's misfortune, the Japanese aspired to seek the same territory they currently owned. The Japanese proposed another compromise similar to the 1875 Treaty of Saint Petersburg, Russia would have control of Manchuria in exchange for Japan incorporating the Korean Peninsula into its own endeavors. Nevertheless, Russia, in an act of discrepancy, ultimately refused the Japanese proposition and only counteroffered a division of Korea with Japan along the 39th Parallel line – just one degree north of what would become the current dividing line between North and South Korea. Japan refused and conducted a surprise attack against the Russian navy anchored in Port Arthur, marking the commencement of the 18-month-long Russo-Japanese War.

World War I and Pre-World War II

In 1905, the Russo-Japanese War was concluded with a decisive Japanese victory over Russia by the Treaty of Portsmouth, ultimately giving Japan control of Korea, South Manchuria, which included Port Arthur, and the southern half of the Sakhalin Islands. As a result of Japan's vast territorial acquisition, thousands of Japanese colonists migrated into the southern half of Sakhalin from the mainland over the next four decades.

Along with the consistent Japanese migration towards Sakhalin, the Japanese Empire initiated a rapid series of territorial conquests across Asia and the Pacific, whilst successfully maintaining a somewhat peaceful status with Russia. Nevertheless, this expansionist ideology maintained itself largely controversial within Japan itself, as, at the time, the Pre-World War I fascist government was immensely dispersed between two distinguished aggressive foreign policy choices: the idea of a Northern Expansion Doctrine advocating for an invasion and conquest of the Soviet Union's eastern lands, highly supported by Japanese military forces, as opposed by the second policy, suggesting a Southern Expansion Doctrine that encompassed the mission of attaining western colonial possessions across the Pacific and Southeast Asia, primarily promoted by the Japanese navy. However, before a decision was even made, millions of Japanese and Soviet soldiers faced each other across the frontier of Japanese-occupied Manchuria and the Russian Far East.

In April of 1941, the Japanese and the Soviets signed a five-year-long non-aggression pact, and three months later, the Western Allies imposed a total oil embargo on Japan. This critical shift changed the course of future world events because the Japanese home islands were severely lacking in fossil fuel energy. At the time of World War II, more than 80% of Japan's oil consumption was imported. Without oil reserves, Japan's machinery would collapse. Thus, the Japanese government ultimately decided to utilize the Southern Expansion Doctrine towards the islands of the Dutch East Indies, modern-day Indonesia, which were known at the time to contain substantial oil reserves.

World War II

As the Second World War unfolded, the Japanese government allied itself with the Axis Powers, attacked Pearl Harbor, and went to war against America and its Western allies. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, fought against Nazi Germany in Europe, but never fully engaged in combat with Japan until World War II's last stroke. The Non-Aggression Pact signed by both parties was due to end in April 6 of 1946; however, in April of 1945, as the Red Army was closing in on Berlin, the Soviets renounced the pact and proceeded to engage military forces against the Japanese, just two days later, the United States dropped the infamous atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and on August of the same year, the Soviets formally declared war on the Japanese, launching a full scale invasion into Japanese occupied Manchuria, Korea, the Southern Part of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. Japan announced its surrender just one week after the Soviet declaration of war; still, the Soviets commenced their amphibious invasion of the Kuril Islands to seize them entirely. Japan formally signed the peace treaty on September 2, 1945, but the territories of Sakhalin and the Kuril archipelago had been forcibly incorporated into Soviet jurisdiction.

Consequently, the thousands of Japanese residents in such territories were forcefully deported back into the mainland, while thousands more Russians and Ukrainians migrated to restore the population of the area.

Current Situation

Background

Japan & Russia are involved in a territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands. The four southernmost islands (Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan, and the Habomai islets) have been administered by Russia since WWII and are claimed by Japan (as the "Northern Territories") but are under Russian administration. The 1956 Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration provided for the return of Shikotan and Habomai upon the conclusion of a peace treaty, but no such treaty has ever been signed.

Legal/Historical Perspectives

Both countries have had different perspectives for many years regarding legal and historical issues. Japan believes that the islands were illegally occupied after WWII, while Russia believes that its sovereignty over the islands has been established legally and constitutionally.

Status of Peace Treaty Negotiations

Peace treaty negotiations have essentially come to a standstill. As per the MOFA website, in March 2022, Russia said that it will temporarily cease all discussions related to territorial disputes, stop allowing Japanese citizens to enter Russia without visas, cancel the four-island exchange program, and end joint economic activities. Russia argues that Tokyo's application of sanctions due to broader geopolitical issues made continued negotiations impossible at this time. While Japan is seeking a peace treaty to be tied to the return of the islands, Russia is unwilling to negotiate until the sanctions imposed by Japan are removed.

Escalation/Military Build-Up

Moscow has greatly enhanced its military presence in the disputed islands. Missile troops reportedly conducted training exercises on Matua Island, one of the Kuril Islands, using deployed and camouflaged vehicles. Russia sees the Kuril Islands as a strategically located buffer zone, particularly because of their value to Russia's Pacific naval base. Tokyo has consistently expressed opposition to this development. When Russia restricted vessel navigation in the Southern Kurils (both military and civilian) from April 16-30, Japan formally complained via diplomatic channels in late April. Japan saw this action as a direct challenge to its sovereignty claims and as an attempt to increase its control over the area.

Targeted Civil Society

In addition to restricting military activity on the disputed islands, Russia has taken steps to restrict civil society in Japan linked to the territorial dispute. In April 2025, the Northern Territory Issue Association (a Japanese NGO advocating for the return of the Kuril Islands) was labeled as an "undesirable organization" by the government in Moscow. This label would make any involvement between the NGO and Russian organizations illegal and could exacerbate the rift between Japan and Russia. For Japan, the territorial dispute is a highly political topic. The 2025 Diplomatic Bluebook reiterated Japan's longstanding position that the four islands are "inherent territory" that is currently under "illegal occupation" by Russia. The use of stronger language emphasizes the importance of the dispute in defining Japan's foreign policy, particularly in its bilateral relations with Russia.

Disruption to Economic Cooperation

In addition to restrictions on military and diplomatic cooperation, economic cooperation has also been disrupted. A treaty allowing Japanese fishing vessels to fish in areas adjacent to the disputed islands has been suspended by Russia, citing non-payment by Japan of agreed-upon monetary commitments. The suspension of the treaty is likely to impact local and national economies and will undermine the livelihoods of people who depend on access to fishing grounds. Another factor compounding the situation is Japan's claim that Russia is limiting the freedom of navigation in the surrounding waters not just for warships, but also for civilian ships. The protest in April 2025 illustrates Japan's concern that Moscow is using control of the surrounding waterways to support its de facto sovereignty over the islands.

Geopolitical/Strategic Implications

Russia's increasing military build-up in the disputed islands fits into a larger strategic framework in the Asia-Pacific. Many analysts believe that Moscow sees the Kurils as a critical component of its defense architecture, protecting its eastern flank and providing it with influence in regional power dynamics. For Japan, regaining control of the Kurils is important, but the lack of progress on the territorial dispute, combined with ongoing sanctions and security concerns, suggests that a negotiated resolution in the near term is unlikely. Under current circumstances, Moscow is taking a hardline stance, citing Russia's constitutional authority, and expanding its defense-related infrastructure on the islands. Therefore, concessions are extremely costly for the Russian government. Japan can continue to pursue diplomatic avenues; however, there are very few alternatives available to Japan without additional leverage or a change in Russian policy.

Summary & Outlook

As of the latest reports, the situation of the Kuril Islands dispute between Russia and Japan remains tense and unresolved. Russian peace treaty negotiations with Japan have officially been suspended amid the country's renewed demands for the return of the Kuril Islands. In reaction to Japan's stance and sanctions, Russia terminated visa-free travel for Japanese citizens and froze joint economic projects in the disputed region. Russia has also increased military activities, including drills near the southern Kurils, further escalating tensions. Japan continues to assert that the islands are an integral and illegally occupied region of its territory, reaffirming this position in official statements, such as in a draft for the 2022 Diplomatic Bluebook. On the contrary, Russia has hardened its position, emphasizing that the territorial question is closed under its constitution and bolstering military defenses in the islands. Furthermore, attempts at dialogue have stalled with no peace treaty predicted in the near future, and diplomatic relations remain strained with mutual sanctions and no compromise on sovereignty.

Past UN Actions/Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The 1855 Treaty of Shimoda was primarily intended to establish official diplomatic relations and create a decisive peaceful boundary between the two nations in the region. Before this treaty, there was no formally recognized border separating Japanese and Russian territories in the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin areas, leading to potential conflicts and uncertainties. Once signed, the treaty established initial boundaries between Japan and Russia. Under this treaty, Japan received sovereignty over the four southernmost islands in the Kuril chain, including Kunashir, Iturup, Shikotan, and the Habomai islands, while Russia retained the rest of the islands and shared joint control of Sakhalin Island. The treaty, however, left Sakhalin under joint Russo-Japanese control, while the Kuril Islands were divided between the two countries, which eventually led to conflicts and ambiguity regarding jurisdiction. Two decades later, the Treaty of Saint Petersburg in 1875 saw Japan cede its interests in Sakhalin to Russia in exchange for full control over the entire Kuril Islands chain. However, discrepancies in translations and interpretations of this treaty later became a root cause of disputes, especially regarding which islands precisely constituted the Kurils.

After Japan took full control of the Kuril Islands, its influence in Northeast Asia expanded alongside Russia's growing presence in Manchuria and Korea. Negotiations and diplomatic efforts failed to resolve competing interests, especially as both countries sought to secure territorial and economic advantages. These tensions culminated in the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, fueled by clashes over control of Korea and southern Manchuria. The war ended with Japan's victory, solidifying its status as a regional power and leading to the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905, which adjusted territorial control once again, with Japan gaining southern Sakhalin while retaining the Kuril Islands.

At the same time, the war led to the 1905 Russian Revolution, leading the Russian Empire to become the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, otherwise known as the Soviet Union. Both Japan and the newly established Soviet Union engaged in localized confrontations over fishing rights and territorial claims following this period. To ease tensions, the 1925 Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention would recognize Japanese rights over the islands while allowing the Soviets access to adjacent waters, but it did not fully resolve the issue, given it left the underlying sovereignty disputes and competing strategic interests unaddressed, leading to continued tensions over territorial and fishing rights.

Throughout the 1930s, militarization and competing ambitions intensified, culminating in skirmishes that foreshadowed broader conflicts during World War II, internally setting the stage for later Allied proposals and postwar adjustments. The outcomes of World War II profoundly altered the geopolitical landscape. At the 1943 Cairo and Tehran Conferences, the Allied powers discussed future arrangements, with U.S. President Roosevelt proposing Soviet possession of southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, but with Japan retaining fishing rights. However, legal transfer was pending. Later, in 1945, the Yalta Agreement between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union promised Soviet entry into the war against Japan in return for possession of the Kuril Islands and southern Sakhalin. However, the text was vague about which specific islands were to be transferred, leading to contested interpretations of the territory's future. In addition, following Japan's surrender at the end of the war, the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty formalized Japan's renunciation of claims to the Kuril Islands but did not explicitly recognize Soviet sovereignty, leaving sovereignty claims ambiguous. By then, the Soviet Union had taken full control of the islands and displaced the Japanese inhabitants. Postwar negotiations persisted, including the crucial 1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration, which restored diplomatic relations; however, it did not resolve the ongoing sovereignty dispute.

In addition, the Soviet Union was reluctant to cede control in the face of military and settlement interests. In the post-Soviet era, attempts were made to reinstate negotiations.

In 1993, the Tokyo Declaration, signed by the Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, acknowledged the dispute and pledged cooperation toward resolutions based on international law; nonetheless, progress remained limited. In the 2010s, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin held several meetings, intending to move towards a peace treaty and greater cooperation. President Putin offered to sign a treaty without preconditions, but Japan insisted that the territorial dispute be resolved first, leading to stalemates. Currently, the dispute remains unresolved amid continuing diplomatic tensions and military posturing; Russia retains control over the islands, while Japan maintains its sovereignty claim over the four southernmost islands.

POSITION OF MAJOR BLOCS

Japan

Japan claims sovereignty over the Southern Kuril Islands, which it calls the Northern Territories, and that they are rightfully theirs due to its status as an inherent Japanese territory that is under Russia's "illegal" occupation. Japan seeks to reclaim such territories, calling for the demilitarization of the archipelago if negotiations are to resume truly. Furthermore, Japan argues that there are historical claims to appoint the Kurils as theirs. In the Cairo Declaration of 1943, made by the Allies, it is stated that Japan shall be stripped of all islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914, and shall also be expelled from all territories which she has taken by violence and greed, in reference to the Kuril Islands. However, the Japanese government quickly refutes such claims by providing historical evidence of the existence of the 1855 Treaty of Shimoda and the 1875 Treaty of Saint Petersburg, which peacefully and in consensus divided the territory of the Kuril archipelago and Sakhalin Island. Japan seeks to establish a comprehensive peace treaty to finalize these unresolved territorial issues, stating its flexibility in its willingness to be flexible on the timing and manner of the islands' return if their attribution to Japan is confirmed.

Russian Federation

Russia's primary motive for maintaining control over the Kuril Islands is primarily a military one. The islands are a vital point of exit for both the Russian Pacific Fleet and offer valuable options for weapon fires and intelligence collection. Nevertheless, above all, it contains materials that are crucial for the creation of supersonic aircraft. In May of 2024, the Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu confirmed that Russia has constructed numerous surveillance bases and coastal communications facilities on the Kuril Islands.

In terms of historical evidence, the Russian government argues that the Yalta Agreement of 1945, in which the Western Allies explicitly promised Soviet control of the Kurils in exchange for their declaration of war on Japan, as seen in the August declaration of war in 1945. In 2022, in order to cement their control of the archipelago, Russia has taken measures to cut off Japan both economically and culturally: Russia suspended its fishing agreement with Japan, which allowed Japanese fishermen to utilize water from the Southernmost islands, and banned “extremist maps” that do not portray Russia as the rightful claimer of the Kuril Islands. Overall, since the Soviet invasion of the Kuril archipelago, Russia has consistently maintained dominance over the region, as its interests are deeply rooted in the islands’ potential to boost the nation’s economy and military capabilities.

Ukraine

On October 7, 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a decree formally recognizing the Kuril Islands as a Japanese territory temporarily occupied by Russia. Russia has since used infrastructure from the Kuril Islands in the war against Ukraine, transferring an anti-aircraft missile defense system from the islands to Ukraine. Apart from that, approximately 60% of the population of the Kuril Islands is descended from Ukrainians forcibly moved to the archipelago after the USSR’s 1945 invasion for repopulation purposes. Ukraine’s support for the Kuril Islands is a clear example of its role as a key ally against Russian aggression, ultimately seeking to maintain a stance of utmost support for Japan; however, it has halted its support due to its own dispute with Russia.

United States of America

Currently, the United States supports Japan's claims over the Kuril archipelago and endorses the stance that the islands are an inherent, sovereign part of Japan. Even though the U.S. is known to have been occupied by Russia through the Soviet Invasion of 1945, its stance has undergone significant modification. As Japan joined the Axis Powers and bombed Pearl Harbor, the United States proceeded to enter into an immense feud with the Japanese government. Through the bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Yalta Agreement, in which Western powers promised the Kuril Islands to the Soviet Union in exchange for them to declare war on Japan, The United States has been a pinnacle player in contributing to the escalation of tensions and the eventual signing of the September 2nd peace treaty between Russia and Japan that officialized the seizure of entirety of the Kuril archipelago and the Sakhalin island to Russia. Additionally, the United States intervened in the last peace attempt between Russia and Japan, forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw its commitment from the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration until the U.S. military presence in Japan was resolved. Despite all of the nation's historical implications on behalf of the issue, since the Cold War, establishing a decades long feud between the United States and Russia, and 2022, with the Russian declaration of war on Ukraine, the United States of America has greatly opposed Russia's maneuvers to seize sovereign territories and assert its dominance, averting, in this case, history to support Japan.

People's Republic of China

Historically, China has supported Japanese sovereignty over the Kuril Islands. Chairman Mao Zedong established this stance in 1964, and subsequent Chinese leaders followed this precedent. Nevertheless, President Xi Jinping recently overturned this six-decade-long policy by fully supporting Russia through signing a pact that pledged a “no limits” partnership in diplomacy between these countries days before Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Since then, Russia and China have been leveraging Taiwan and the Kuril Islands, respectively, to enhance their territorial claims and respective agendas further.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description
17th-18th Century	Japan emerges from isolation and explores the northeastern area of Hokkaido, reaching the Kuril archipelago. Simultaneously, the Russian Empire expands into the Northern Pacific, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands.
1855	<i>The Treaty of Shimodo</i> is ratified, as a result of Japan and Russia agreeing to divide the Kuril Islands. In exchange, Japan receives the entire Kuril archipelago.
1875	<i>The Treaty of Saint Petersburg</i> : Russia gains full control of the Sakhalin Island, while Japan is granted full control of the Kuril Islands.
Early 1900s	Japan and Russia compete for influence in Manchuria and Korea. Japan offers a compromise: Russia gets Manchuria, Japan takes Korea. Russia, however, refuses the compromise, proposing a division where both nations would solely split Korea along the 39th Parallel. Japan refuses and launches a surprise attack on Port Arthur, starting the Russo-Japanese War.
1905	Japan decisively defeats Russia. Japan gains Korea, South Manchuria (including Port Arthur), and the southern half of Sakhalin Island through <i>the Treaty of Portsmouth</i> . Japanese colonists began to settle in South Sakhalin.

April 1941	Japan and Russia signed a five-year Non-Agression Pact.
July 1941	The Western Allies imposed a total oil embargo on Japan, making it shift to the Southern Expansion Doctrine, targeting the oil-rich Dutch East Indies.
1945 - End of WWII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April: USSR renounces the Non-Agression pact - August 6: Drops the atomic bomb on Hiroshima - August 8: Soviet Union declares war on Japan - August 9: Soviet Forces invade Manchuria, Korea, South Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands - August 15: Japan announces its surrender - September 2: Japan signs formal surrender; Soviets occupy the Kuril Islands
Post 1945	Japanese residents of the Kuril Islands are deported; Russians and Ukrainians settle there. <i>The 1945 Yalta Agreement</i> prompted Soviet occupation, though the U.S. denies having authority to transfer sovereignty.
1951	<i>San Francisco Peace Treaty:</i> Japan renounces claims to the Kuril Islands, but the treaty does not recognize Soviet Sovereignty over them.
1956	<i>Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration:</i> Ended the state of war and restored diplomatic relations. USSR offers to return Habomai Islands and Shikotan after the peace treaty, but cancels the offer in 1960 due to the United States military presence in Japan.

2018	<i>East Asia Summit:</i> Putin claims the Joint Declaration does not include returning any islands. Abe responded in 2019, stating Japan will not sign a peace treaty until the dispute is resolved.
2023	Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin declares the Kurils a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), offering residents reduced customs duties, including on Japanese imports.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Kuril Islands (Kuril archipelago)

A chain of volcanic islands stretching between Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula and Japan's Hokkaido.

Northern Territories

Japan's nomenclature for the four southernmost Kuril Islands (Kunashir, Iturup, Shikotan, Habomai).

Sea of Okhotsk

A marginal sea bordered by Russia and the Kuril Islands.

North Pacific Ocean

The part of the Pacific where the Kuril Islands allow control over key shipping and military routes.

World War II

The global conflict during which the Soviet Union occupied the Kuril Islands following Japan's surrender.

Sovereignty

The full right and power of a state to govern a territory.

International Law

A set of legal rules and principles governing relations between nations.

Strategic Importance

The geopolitical value of a location is due to its position, military utility, or economic resources.

Naval Power Projection

The ability of a nation to use its naval forces to influence events and assert control far from its own shores.

Militarization

The process of building up military forces and infrastructure in a territory

Tor-M2U Surface-to-Air Missile System

A mobile missile defense system was deployed by Russia in the Kuril Islands to reinforce its military presence.

Co-Dominion

The joint control of a country's or territory's affairs by other countries.

FURTHER RESEARCH

1. BBC News - Kuril islands dispute between Russia and Japan:
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11664434>
2. Harvard International Review - A Dispute for the Decades: The Russo-Japanese Struggle for the Kuril Islands:
<https://hir.harvard.edu/kuril-islands-russia-japan/>
3. Youtube (Prof James Ker-Lindsay) - RUSSIA-JAPAN | A Kuril Islands Conflict?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1W_s7vGBe5Q
4. Youtube (RealLifeLore) - Why Russia is Fighting Japan Over These Islands
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfrxVuJdFc4>
5. Youtube (DW News) - Japan claims sovereignty over Russia controlled Kuril Islands | DW News
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0AjdFlx9PY>

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ❖ What legal or historical claims do Japan and Russia respectively have over the Kuril Islands, and how do international treaties factor into their arguments?
- ❖ How did the outcome of World War II influence the sovereignty and control of the Kuril Islands, and are those wartime agreements still valid under international law today?
- ❖ What is the strategic and military importance of the Kuril Islands to Russia, particularly in terms of Pacific access and regional defense?
- ❖ How would a potential resolution to the Kuril Islands dispute shift power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in relation to China, the U.S., and regional alliances?
- ❖ What efforts have been made through bilateral negotiations or international mediation to resolve the dispute, and why have they failed or stalled?
- ❖ Can the UN or another international body play a neutral mediating role in the dispute, and what precedent exists for resolving similar territorial issues?
- ❖ What role does Russia's military presence on the islands play in escalating or deterring conflict, and how does this affect Japan's national security concerns?
- ❖ Should the Security Council consider the demilitarization of the disputed islands as a confidence-building measure?

- ❖ How does the principle of territorial integrity under the UN Charter apply in this case, and can the self-determination of any local populations be invoked?
- ❖ What potential diplomatic or territorial compromises could lead to a sustainable and peaceful resolution of the Kuril Islands conflict?

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Topic B: Addressing Nuclear Growth in the Korean Peninsula



Kim Jong Un, North Korean leader, walks in front a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

The growth of countries' nuclear capabilities' remains a critical issue for international peace and security, as highlighted consistently by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It is well known that the possession of nuclear weapons, otherwise referred to as weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) can be extremely destabilizing for entire regions, potentially jeopardizing the security of millions of individuals. One of these examples lies in the Korean peninsula, between the nations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The DPRK has engaged in persistent pursuits of ballistic missile and nuclear weapons program developments , directly disregarding several resolutions adopted by the UNSC that appeal to impeding these activities. Several high importance resolutions of the UNSC, such as 1718, 2094, 2371, and 2397, demanded an end to missile and nuclear tests and the abandonment of all weapons programs as a return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (1970). Most of such examples have imposed sanctions which include bans on key exports such as seafood and coal, and limits on petroleum imports, all of which aim to enforce compliance with international peace efforts and slash the DPRK's monetary and resource funding dedicated to the development of nuclear programs (Arms Control Association, 2022).

Most recently, tensions between the DPRK and the ROK have escalated significantly, with the DPRK expanding on both tactical and strategic nuclear capabilities. Given the ROK's lack of possession of WMDs, the heightened tensions between both nations have been met by nuclear deterrence postures and increased military preparedness by the ROK, supported by the United

States, conducting joint military exercises involving nuclear forces. These developments pose an intricate security problem, currently being faced by local and international actors, driven by the DPRK's alleged requirement to deter external threats by the possession of nuclear capabilities (United Nations, 2025).

The UNSC has continuously served as the most prominent international platform in coordinating efforts and hosting discussions to address the given challenges associated with nuclear development. The Council's consistent efforts to tackle the growth of nuclear arsenals remains as an emphasizing factor to both the security concerns and the humanitarian situation linked to North Korea's military development over the security and welfare of its own population. However, consensus on nuclear prohibitive measures remains a persistent challenge, given the strongly diverging positions among the members of the UNSC. Most notably the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, who have at times opposed specific actions (Beech, 2022). For example, in May 2022, China and Russia vetoed a U.S.-led draft resolution that would have imposed additional sanctions on the DPRK in response to its ballistic missile launches, arguing that such measures would be counterproductive and escalate tensions on the Korean Peninsula (UN Security Council, 2022). Additionally, in March 2024, Russia blocked the extension of the mandate for a UN sanctions monitoring panel tasked with overseeing implementation of existing sanctions on the DPRK, preventing continued expert oversight of the nation's compliance (Ağlarci, 2024).

History

Korean War

For millennia, Korea has existed as a unified territory, remaining like so during the 35 years of Japanese colonial rule. However, in 1945, following Japan's treacherous defeat in WWII, its empire collapsed, leaving the Korean Peninsula liberated and in a power vacuum.

Amid a pretentious opportunity, the Soviet Union seized the northernmost area of the peninsula, leaving the south unattended. As communist ideology swept Western ideology, the United States, likewise, seized the southern section in an attempt to stall the expansion of Eastern ideology and to propagate its Western agenda instead. As the USSR and the U.S. effectively established functioning protectorates, both reached a binding consensus regarding the official border delimitation between the states — the territory shall be divided equally in accordance with the 38th Parallel. In 1948, both the Northern and Southern zones became independent territories, with respective external powers effectively retreating.

In the south, the First Republic of Korea was established, led by conservative nationalist leader Syngman Rhee, its first democratically elected leader. In response, the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea was consolidated in the northern area of the Korean Peninsula, led by Kim Il-Sung, marking the start of the Kim Dynasty. On June 25th, 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th Parallel in an attempt to unify the Korean Peninsula under one communist rule. Aided by Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong, the DPRK's attack swiftly encompassed the majority of the southern territory, until the United States, led by Harry Truman, intervened. With United Nations authorization, the United States deployed its troops to assist the southerners. Equipped with harsh aerial attacks, traditional munitions, and napalms — a chemical weapon capable of massive chemical burning — the South Korean-American backed troops successfully overturned their situation, reclaiming their lost territory and seizing

parts of the northern territories, crossing the 38th Parallel. However, with Mao Zedong's incessant support, North Korean troops managed to push back the South Koreans past the *de facto* border and re-attain their lost territory.

Such a determined *de facto* line — the non-official border delimitation established by the 38th Parallel, and in fact the resultant border of the confrontations between North and South Korea during the years of 1950 -1953 (Korean War) — will modulate over the course of the war's entirety.

On July 27th, 1953, shortly after Joseph Stalin's death, an armistice was signed, marking the cessation of hostilities among the two nations. It was then decided that the official border delimitation between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would continue to be based on the 38th Parallel; however, this time, the line would be placed slightly below the 38th Parallel. Nevertheless, a legitimate peace treaty was never fully enacted, leaving such unresolved tensions to arise as North Korea began its nuclear proliferation. The Korean War culminated in North Korea's realization of the pretentious alliance between the United States of America and the Republic of South Korea, and the hazardous potentiality their actions could have on the state, leading to a long-term strategy for self-defence and deterrence. Such insecurity and the substantial existing diplomatic relationship between the Soviet Union and DPRK resulted in the northern state's decision to mass-produce nuclear weapons to ensure safety and autonomy.

Nuclear Progression

North Korea's nuclear technology growth began in the mid-1950s. Early nuclear research was conducted and led by scientists Do Sang-nok, Han In-Seok, and Lee Seungi-gi. Since that period, North Korea has already adopted nuclear growth and development as the country's top priority under the command of Kim Il-Sung, recruiting a handful of renowned nuclear scientists

from East Germany and the Soviet Union to focus on the progressive proliferation of nuclear armaments.

At the 4th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, held in September 1961, Kim Il-sung urged the government to pursue research and development for the peaceful management of nuclear arms. Thus, during the early 1960s, Soviet engineers arrived in North Korea in secrecy (*Center for East Asian Peace and Cooperation Studies / Ritsumeikan University, 2022*), tasked with assisting the government in building a research reactor and a generation's worth of competent nuclear scientists at a venue that soon became the international system's dread — Yongbyon. The planning and execution of this plan ensured the preservation of North Korea's nuclear continuity. From a diplomatic standpoint, the Soviet Union's persistent support for North Korea aroused serious suspicions, prompting it to issue an official proclamation on the motives behind the aid. The international system took such assistance as a peaceful nuclear cooperation under the rhetoric of "Atoms for Peace." Nonetheless, such collaborative progression would bear the responsibility for the fruition of infamous warheads and ballistic missiles that currently pose a hazardous threat to North Korea's neighboring states, most notably Japan and South Korea.

Moscow denied any intention to assist North Korea's military program, insisting that its works were based on a purely civilian nature. Despite their endless attempts to conceal the actual means of this relation, the facts pointed to a different outcome: the Soviet Union signed nuclear cooperation agreements with North Korea in 1959 and again in 1962, during the 4th and 5th Congresses of the Workers' Party. Ultimately, these signings led to the planning and construction of a research and development nuclear reactor, which was finalized in 1965. Thus, in that year, the IRT-2000 research reactor — built with Soviet assistance and supplied with Soviet fuel — began operations. While technically intended for medical and industrial isotope production, the reactor's

design made it prone to produce weapon-grade plutonium. The USSR also trained North Korean personnel at nuclear institutes; however, they also taught in Russia, famously in Dubna, one of the most crucial nuclear research facilities of Russian history. Moreover, the Soviets were also major suppliers of uranium prospecting technology and expertise, enabling North Korea to develop its own domestic nuclear fuel cycle.

Non-Proliferation Treaty Period

On December 12th, 1985, North Korea officially acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); however, it is non-compliant with the requirement to establish a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Under the third article (Article III) of the NPT, North Korea had 18 months to effectuate such a safeguards agreement. On September 27th, 1991, United States President George Bush announced the unilateral withdrawal of all naval and terrain-based tactical nuclear armaments deployed around. In response to President Bush's move, South Korean leader Roh Tae Woo propagated a declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, under which South Korea would strictly abide by, committing not to produce, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons. Moreover, the declaration also prohibited South Korea from using nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities. The declaration, if successfully enacted, would culminate in the satisfaction of all of North Korea's requirements for IAEA inspections of its nuclear activity, thereby becoming an IAEA-aligned state.

On January 20th, 1992, the two Koreas signed the "South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." Under the declaration clauses, both countries were obligated to agree and comply with the established prerequisites of not producing, possessing, storing, deploying, or using nuclear weapons, and utilizing nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities.

Since both the ROK and the DPRK were officially part of the IAEA, the declaration referred to the IAEA's mandate for mutual nuclear inspections for verification. With that effectuated, North Korea finally concluded the required comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA, ratifying it on April 9th, 1992. Nevertheless, IAEA inspections discovered discrepancies in North Korea's "initial report" on its nuclear program and activities, as it solicited clarification on several issues, including the abnormal quantity of reprocessed plutonium in North Korea's possession.

Therefore, on February 9th, 1993, the IAEA demanded the exclusive inspections of two sites, in which they accused North Korea of potentially storing nuclear waste for repurposing. The request is evidently supported by legitimate documentation that demonstrates the continuity of North Korea's nuclear endeavors; therefore, it shows its noncompliance with its commitment under the NPT. North Korea, however, firmly refused the IAEA's request. Amid the inspection requests, North Korea has announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT within the next three months. Therefore, the IAEA declares that North Korea is not adhering to its safeguards agreement and that it is out of its control to guarantee that North Korean nuclear material is not being diverted for unpeaceful means. Following talks with the United States, North Korea suspended its decision to withdraw from the NPT just before it was finalized. Thus, North Korea agrees and reassures that it will fully and impartially implement the IAEA safeguards agreement. For its part, the United States, under the Clinton administration, grants assurance towards the use of force and threat, which includes the use of nuclear arms, in case North Korea "loses its track." On February 15th, 1994, North Korea finalized an agreement with the IAEA to allow unanimous inspections on all of its declared nuclear facilities, successfully averting sanctions from the Security Council.

Nevertheless, on June 13th, 1994, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the IAEA — distinct from pulling out of the NPT, as the IAEA is not directly part of the NPT, only its mandatory nuclear inspections — due to excessive monitoring and supposed interference in North Korean internal affairs. The IAEA contended that North Korea's safeguards agreement would remain in force; however, North Korea's unwillingness to continue the compromise led to its suspension from participating in and carrying out IAEA functions as a member state.

Geneva Agreement of 1994

On October 21st, 1994, the United States and North Korea concluded four months of negotiations by adopting the “Agreed Framework” in Geneva, Switzerland. To resolve the arising concerns over Pyongyang's plutonium-producing reactors and Yongbyon reprocessing facility, the United States, through such negotiations, called on North Korea to fully freeze and eventually eliminate all of its nuclear activities, a process that also constituted the complete dismantling of three nuclear reactors, two of which, at the time, were under construction. North Korea also further agreed to confer to IAEA verification of its compliance regarding the effectuation of the “special inspections,” and it further mentions its adherence to permit 8,000 spent nuclear reactor fuel to be removed to a third country. In exchange, Pyongyang will receive two LWRs (Light Water Reactor) and annual shipments of heavy fuel oil during the construction period of such LWRs. The Light Water Reactors were financed and constructed through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), a multinational consortium.

NPT Succession

On January 10th, 2003, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), effective January 11th. Despite the fifth article (Article X) of the NPT instating that a country is obligated to give a three month notice in advance of its effective withdrawal — which technically signified that North Korea was unable to withdraw at that exact period —, North Korea counter argued that it has already satisfied such requirement due to its proclamation on March 12th, 1993, suspending its succession decision one day before it became legally binding. With its effective and official succession from the NPT, DPRK re-ignited its nuclear progression by reprocessing the nuclear fuel from the five-megawatt reactor frozen under the “Agreed Framework.”

Post NPT Succession + Nuclear Tests

With the succession of the NPT, a collective effort to address the North Korean Nuclear issue through dialogue emerged—the Six-Party Talks. The Six-Party Talks were a series of meetings among North and South Korea, Japan, the United States, Russia, and China. They managed to achieve some recognizable progress, including the adoption of the “Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks” on September 19th, 2005; “Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement” on February 13th, 2007; and “Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement” on October 3rd, 2007. Nevertheless, its overall effectiveness is somewhat irrelevant, as it has not convened since December 2008, and the parties failed to reach a legitimate consensus on the verification protocol for nuclear facilities and material.

During the same period the Six-Party Talks occurred, North Korea initiated nuclear tests. The DPRK’s first test was conducted in 2006. Initially, the first test was interpreted as a failure due to the estimated yield (~1 kiloton) being very low in comparison to the first nuclear weapon tests of nuclear-weaponized

states (over 20 kilotons). However, further information indicated that the designed yield was only four kilotons; a yield of approximately one kiloton would represent roughly 25% of the target yield, suggesting that the test was instead a partial success. The second test took place in 2009 and was estimated to yield a few kilotons, roughly the alleged target yield of the 2006 test (4 kilotons). DPRK claimed that the test helped satisfactorily address the scientific and technological problems arising from the further increase in the power of nuclear arms. The third nuclear test was carried out in 2013, where North Korea claimed that it had detonated a smaller, lighter device with greater explosive power.

Nevertheless, the third test was inconclusive as the international atmospheric monitoring findings were useless. In January of 2006, North Korea claimed to have detonated an “H-Bomb” (4th test). During the test, scientists did not utilize or demonstrate a typical thermonuclear yield, which raised the possibility that the tested device was met with skepticism, and some assessed that a boosted-fission device may have actually been tested, which is the incorrect method when measuring the effectiveness of nuclear arms on a larger scale. In the fifth nuclear test, carried out in September 2016, the DPRK claimed to have tested a nuclear warhead for ballistic missile delivery. This was the first test in which North Korea claimed the use of various fissile materials, indicating that the tests might have utilized both uranium and plutonium, an immense improvement in their nuclear works. And finally, in the sixth and final nuclear test, which occurred in 2017, a device of considerably higher yield was detonated. North Korea claimed a two-stage thermonuclear device, an H-bomb for an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). An ICBM is a nuclear missile capable of traversing more than 15,000 km, and is the most crudely destructible thermonuclear missile there is. The sixth test was the largest, in terms of scale, and the most successful, laying the groundwork for the eventual triumphant creation of an effective ICBM for North Korea.

Current Situation

Nuclear Capabilities and Advances

The Korean peninsula is among the most notable places for potential nuclear conflict in the world of today. Since the last decade, North Korea has developed from demonstrating a limited nuclear capability to developing an expansive nuclear program deemed to be fully functional. It is estimated that North Korea now has dozens of assembled warheads available for use, and could rapidly produce many more if it continues to operate its current facilities. North Korea's nuclear capability development has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. In terms of quantity, North Korea has expanded its capability in number of warheads, and in terms of quality, it has made significant strides in miniaturizing warheads, improving rocket motors, creating solid fuel ballistic missiles, and experimenting with delivery systems such as hypersonic and submarine launched rockets. Collectively, these advances will make it more difficult for regional countries to develop effective missile defense systems and will alter perceptions of threats across Asia.

Testing Activity and Political Signaling

North Korea's rapid testing pace reflects both technical experimentation and political communication. When North Korea launches new rockets, some described by North Korea as being capable of delivering hypersonic (or glide) vehicles, they intend to demonstrate technological progress, and to reinforce their domestic narrative about the role of their nuclear and missile programs in deterring other nations and protecting their sovereignty. There are indications of possible activity at North Korea's underground nuclear test site indicating possible preparations for another nuclear test. A nuclear test would mark the first time North Korea conducts a nuclear test since 2017, and would represent a significant escalation, reinforcing Pyongyang's commitment to advancing their weapons program in the face of continuing international pressure.

South Korea and Allied State Responses

In response to North Korea's continued development of its nuclear and missile programs, South Korea and its allies have strengthened deterrence efforts. The United States, South Korea, and Japan have enhanced trilateral cooperation, conducting more frequent joint military exercises and enhancing plans to integrate their air and missile defenses. These efforts are designed to provide reassurance to South Korea and its neighbors that the three nations are committed to defending each other in the event of a conflict initiated by North Korea. However, these actions will likely exacerbate North Korea's perception that it is surrounded by hostile forces. In addition to reiterating its commitment to extended deterrence, the United States has also provided assurances that it will defend South Korea in the event of a conflict. South Korea has also begun to develop a nuclear powered submarine capability, supported by allied nations, which it views as a necessary step to improve its military capabilities in response to the growing North Korean threat. North Korea views these developments as further evidence of a regional security imbalance.

Strategic Positions of China and Russia

Both China and Russia have strategic interests in the region and have played important roles in shaping the regional security environment. Both governments publicly advocate for restraint, diplomacy, and negotiation as the best means of resolving tensions between North Korea and its adversaries. Both governments oppose what they perceive as destabilizing actions, and have taken positions that differ from those of the United States and its allies, particularly with regard to the use of sanctions and coercion. Although neither government advocates for the use of force against North Korea, both have expressed support for providing North Korea with sanctions relief and confidence building measures, even as they maintain varying degrees of economic and diplomatic ties with Pyongyang.

Because of the differing priorities of these major powers, it is unlikely that they will present a united front in responding to the North Korean nuclear and missile program, creating opportunities for North Korea to mitigate the effects of international pressure.

Sanctions, Enforcement, and Limits

Sanctions imposed by the United Nations and individual countries are critical tools used to constrain North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Sanctions have undoubtedly caused difficulties for North Korea's ability to procure certain goods and materials necessary for weapons development, and have increased the costs associated with maintaining and expanding its nuclear and missile capabilities. However, there is considerable debate about the effectiveness of sanctions in achieving these goals. North Korea has demonstrated the ability to adapt to sanctions through the use of sophisticated methods of evading sanctions restrictions, illegal financial networks, and clandestine procurement. The uneven enforcement of sanctions by different countries limits their effectiveness, and the humanitarian implications of sanctions have led to criticism that overly broad sanctions measures may harm innocent civilians and undermine international support for a pressure-based approach to addressing the North Korean nuclear and missile programs.

Stalemate in Diplomacy and Barriers to Negotiation

Over the past decade, there have been numerous high level summits and working level negotiations aimed at finding a resolution to the issues related to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Some of these negotiations have resulted in temporary optimism, but none have produced agreements that verifiably halted or reversed North Korea's nuclear and missile development. North Korea seeks sanctions relief, security guarantees, and greater international acceptance and recognition for itself and its leaders.

Conversely, the United States and its allies continue to demand that North Korea achieve complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization. The primary obstacle to reaching a successful agreement is the fundamental disagreement between the two sides over what constitutes success. Additionally, both sides have struggled with issues related to verification of North Korean compliance with any agreement reached. Furthermore, disagreements over the sequence of events required for the United States and its allies to implement their obligations under any agreement have contributed to the breakdown of negotiations.

Impact on Regional Stability and Human Security

The continued development of North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities increases the risk of miscalculation and escalation in times of crisis. As a result of heightened military alert levels, joint military exercises, and retaliatory signaling, there is an increased likelihood that misunderstandings can escalate quickly. Beyond the strategic implications of the current situation, civilians living in the region are affected economically, due to decreased humanitarian assistance and shifting defense priorities. There are also additional concerns regarding secondary proliferation, as states may question whether the security arrangements currently in place are reliable enough to protect them from the North Korean threat. If states determine that the security arrangements are unreliable, they may feel compelled to acquire their own advanced deterrent capabilities, leading to increased instability in the long run.

Status Quo

The situation on the Korean peninsula is characterized by a complex and deteriorating security environment. North Korea is continuing to advance and refine its nuclear and missile capabilities. At the same time, the United States, South Korea, and Japan are strengthening their deterrence efforts.



China and Russia are advocating for diplomatic alternatives. Sanctions continue to be applied, North Korea continues to attempt to bypass them, and the U.S.-North Korea negotiating process is experiencing ongoing obstacles. These multiple elements create a security dilemma in which actions intended to enhance national protection ultimately contribute to increased regional tension.

Past UN Actions/Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The Agreed Framework (1994) between the USA and the DPRK, now recognized as an early effort by the international community to diminish Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, committed the DPRK to halting its illegal plutonium weapons program and returning to the NPT in exchange for assistance in building light-water reactors for peaceful energy production and, most importantly, diplomatic recognition. However, the agreement began to unravel during the early 2000s due to distrust between the two nations and several accusations of noncompliance (CNN, 2013).

By January 10, 2003, the DPRK had officially announced its withdrawal from the NPT, precipitating a significant escalation of regional tensions and prompting calls to address the crisis through multilateral diplomacy. Following this announcement, in February, reports by the USA confirmed the reactivation of five-megawatt nuclear reactors in the DPRK's Yongbyon facility, capable of producing plutonium for weapons. By April, the DPRK had announced it had possession of nuclear weapons (Arms Control Association, 2022).

Later, in 2006, the UNSC decisively responded to the DPRK's first nuclear test, which had been conducted earlier on October 9. Five days later, the council unanimously adopted resolution 1718 on October 14, which demanded the immediate cessation of ballistic and nuclear missile programs in the country and condemned the test, whilst imposing initial sanctions to prevent technological, financial, and resource support from reaching the DPRK's weapons programs. Resolution 1718 was also the first of many aimed at directly pressuring the DPRK through international sanctions; however, it also urged the nation to return to diplomatic negotiations to mediate tensions (UN Security Council, 2006).

Following the DPRK's third nuclear test in February 2013, the UNSC took yet another action against the DPRK's weapons programs by significantly strengthening sanctions. Passed in March 2013, Resolution 2094 further expanded sanctions on the nation by forbidding the import of missile- and nuclear-related materials, luxury goods, and other key resources.

The resolution tightened financial restrictions already in place on the DPRK, including bans on bulk cash transfers and the operation of North Korean banks suspected of evading sanctions. In addition, it also empowered UN member states to strengthen travel bans, inspect and seize suspicious cargo, and increase vigilance over the DPRK's diplomatic behavior (UN Security Council, 2013).

In between heightened tensions, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2371 on August 5, 2017. It was a significant escalation in the UN's response to the DPRK's two intercontinental ballistic missile tests recorded previously that summer. The resolution strongly condemned the DPRK's missile tests and called for an immediate end to its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Notoriously, it imposed the harshest sanctions at the time, including total bans on the DPRK's key exports, including coal, seafood, lead, and iron ore, which collectively generate over \$USD 1 billion annually to fund its weapons programs. Also, the resolution targeted the DPRK's financial networks by designating individuals and entities supporting the program, as well as by banning new joint ventures and investments from entering the country. In addition, the resolution also restricted the employment of North Korean workers abroad and empowered member states to deny port access to vessels violating sanctions (United Nations Security Council, 2017). Later that same year, resolution 2397 further tightened the economic pressure in response to continued provocations by further capping petroleum imports and imposing sanctions on North Korean foreign workers (Arms Control Association, 2022).

However, despite rigorous UN sanctions and international diplomatic efforts, including the Six-Party Talks involving the People's Republic of China, the ROK, the Russian Federation, Japan, and the USA, the DPRK continued to advance its nuclear and missile programs. It declared that it would never give up its nuclear weapons, characterizing them as essential to regime survival. The UN continued to emphasize dialogue and peaceful resolution, but tangible progress remained elusive as the DPRK's nuclear program expanded (Nichols, 2025).

In recent years, the UN Secretary-General and the UNSC have repeatedly urged the DPRK to return to the NPT, to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and to comply with UNSC resolutions. The UN has called for renewed diplomatic engagement and offers dialogue as the path to de-escalation. However, Pyongyang's continued missile launches and nuclear tests present ongoing challenges to global and regional security, stability, and peace.

POSITION OF MAJOR BLOCS

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea affirms that it requires the possession of nuclear arms as they are the nation's means of self-defense. It reiterates that stalling North Korea's nuclear proliferation is non-negotiable. Through the successful testing of the "H-Bomb," a "prototype" ICBM, the DPRK has managed to empower itself as a nuclear nation, posing a threat to its neighbouring countries, such as Japan and South Korea, whose firm alliance with the United States of America has further deteriorated their relationship with North Korea. With the construction of the Yongbong Research Facility and Pyongyang's Nuclear Program, North Korea, heavily aided and supplied by the Soviet Union, has managed to achieve high levels of nuclear growth, rates which Kim Jong Un does not seek to stall in the near future.

United States of America

The United States of America's significance in the question of Korean nuclear development dates back to the establishment of a temporary protectorate in the southernmost area of the peninsula, specifically the area left unattended by the Soviet Union, in an attempt to stall the progressive spread of communist propaganda. With South Korea's proclamation in 1948, the U.S. has maintained firm diplomatic relations with the nation, serving as its direct negotiator. It has maintained military or conversational relations, as evidenced by its substantial assistance to South Korean troops during the Korean War. The U.S. has most notably acted in the Geneva Agreement of 1994, where it sought to freeze the DPRK's nuclear progression as it could raise severe implications for the international system. Frankly, the United States active involvement is rooted in its immense desire to prevent North Korea from acquiring a functional ICBM, implicating that both nations were now equally powerful — in other words, another communist nation would have the sustenance to clash with the United

States directly, meaning the United States would lose its influenceability and threatening capacities at Southeast Asia, leaving North Korea as the nuclear power of the region.

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea has a complex position amid the aforementioned circumstances. In 1950, the already proclaimed Republic of Korea was invaded by the North Koreans, who wished to impose communist ideals amidst the conservative and nationalist government of South Korea. In the end, an armistice was signed in 1953, but it never fully developed into a comprehensive peace treaty, leaving the relationship between the Koreas tenuous. South Korea is a strong advocate of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, having been a nation that suggested the implementation of a declaration which called for the obligatory stalling and eventual termination of all nuclear activities in the given location in response to unilateral actions. Currently, it worries about the protection of its sovereignty as North Korea's incessant nuclear growth increases.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation possesses a pivotal role amid nuclear growth in the Korean Peninsula. Similarly to the United States, when the Japanese Empire collapsed post-WWII, leaving Korea in a power vacuum, the Soviet Union assumed control of the northernmost part of the peninsula, propagating its communist ideals amongst the people. The Soviet Union was the greatest ally of North Korea during its impending climb to nuclear acquisition. From sending scientists as emissaries to aid in the construction and establishment of Pyongyang and Yongbyon, teaching North Korean scholars and the future generation of nuclear physicists, and providing technological, financial, and resource support to facilitate proliferation, the Russian Federation has consistently aligned itself with North Korea. Overall, its support for North Korea's

nuclear proliferation reinforces its willingness and support for the continuity of the nation's nuclear endeavors despite recognizing the region's arising security matters.

People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China has an intermediary stance. Historically, the Chinese Republic was of great assistance to North Korea and its troops during the Korean War, as when North Korea faced intense confrontation from South Korean-American troops, Mao Zedong's aid enabled the DPRK to mount a strong counterattack that pushed back the southerners past the 38th Parallel. China has always greatly supported North Korea in its endeavors; however, as of the current circumstances, the PRC calls for the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It calls for peaceful negotiations and for formulating solutions that effectively resolve the issue and present a peaceful rhetoric, despite pursuing diplomacy with North Korea and Russia. Nevertheless, the Chinese convey that the United States of America is at fault as its military junction with South Korea has further aggravated tensions between the Koreas and further reaffirmed North Korea's need to establish itself as a nuclear power to ensure its protection and autonomy amid Western threats, most notably from the American Government. In its efforts to preserve peace, China participated in the Six-Party Talks, presenting itself as an available ally to all nations seeking to promote peace on the peninsula.

Republic of Japan

Japan is at a crossroads between advocating in favor or against nuclear proliferation. North Korea's constant nuclear progression imposes an immense risk to the country's sovereignty, especially amid the status quo, with its "ICBM prototype" reaching a distance relative to Alaska (DPRK → Alaska); therefore, placing both Japan and South Korea clearly in range. Thus, Japan has sought immediate refuge and reliance on the United States, the only Western nuclear

power willing to threaten and effectuate a course of action against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, with DPRK's progressive growth amid impressive nuclear successes, it seems that North Korea will effectively attain an ICBM capable of reaching the United States, even further than Alaska, which would directly diminish the United States' exertion of power and influence in the region, leaving Japan and South Korea unattended. Thus, Japan actively advocated for the immediate denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Parsley, Japan took part in the Six-Party Talks alongside both Koreas, the United States, Russia, and China which adopted the "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks" on September 19th, 2005; "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement" on February 13th, 2007; and "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement" on October 3rd, 2007. As of now, the Japanese Republic calls for immediate multilateral action to formulate an effective solution to the issue.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description
<p>1950 Korean War</p>	<p>The Korean War began when North Korea crossed the border into South Korea and it drew in major international forces and set the stage for the lasting division of the Korean Peninsula. As a result of the ongoing instability caused by the conflict, North Korea will seek to develop nuclear weapons to serve as a deterrence to perceived external threats to its very existence.</p>
<p>1953 Korean Armistice Agreement</p>	<p>Although a cease-fire was declared at the end of the Korean War, there has never been a formal peace treaty; therefore, the division of the Korean Peninsula remains and instability exists. The lack of a peace treaty has encouraged continued military build-up in both North and South Korea; this has contributed to North Korea's belief that it needs to possess nuclear weapons to ensure the stability and longevity of its government.</p>
<p>1956 Soviet nuclear aid to North Korea</p>	<p>The Soviet Union initiated a program to provide North Korea with peaceful nuclear training and nuclear technology. At that point, North Korea's scientists had their initial exposure to nuclear technology. Although the aid was peaceful, it laid the foundation upon which North Korea would eventually be able to develop its own nuclear research and development programs to include nuclear weapons.</p>

<p>1965 Yongbyon research reactor constructed</p>	<p>North Korea built its first research reactor at Yongbyon primarily for civilian purposes. However, the research reactor would eventually become the primary source of plutonium used in North Korea's nuclear weapons development program. Therefore, the construction of the research reactor marked a significant milestone in North Korea's development of a self-sufficient nuclear weapons program.</p>
<p>1985 North Korea joins the NPT</p>	<p>North Korea joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) after signing it in 1985; however, North Korea's commitment to the NPT did not include inspection or verification of its activities. Instead, the NPT became another diplomatic tool available to North Korea to mask its true intentions. Additionally, the same factors that motivated North Korea to join the NPT, namely, security concerns, led North Korea to continue pursuing nuclear capabilities under the guise of "peaceful" research.</p>
<p>1993 Initial NPT withdrawal announcement</p>	<p>In 1993, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT, citing security concerns and threats to its sovereignty. Although North Korea's decision to withdraw from the NPT was delayed, the announcement served as a harbinger of the future willingness of North Korea to utilize nuclear brinkmanship as a means of leveraging concessions from other nations and signified the growing divide between North Korea's stated commitment to the NPT and its actual strategic objectives.</p>

<p>1994 Agreed Framework signed</p>	<p>The United States and North Korea reached an agreement in 1994 known as the Agreed Framework that froze North Korea's plutonium program in exchange for economic benefits, specifically energy assistance. Due to difficulties in implementing the framework and mistrust of each party, the agreement ultimately collapsed. The failure of the agreement demonstrated the fragile nature of long-term nuclear diplomacy.</p>
<p>2002 HEU Program revealed publicly</p>	<p>In 2002, Washington officially accused North Korea of secretly developing a uranium enrichment program (HEU), a breach of the Agreed Framework. The revelation ended all remaining cooperation and accelerated North Korea's nuclear weapons development. This moment exposed the fact that North Korea was pursuing multiple pathways to develop nuclear weapons simultaneously.</p>
<p>2003 Formal NPT Withdrawal</p>	<p>North Korea officially withdrew from the NPT in 2003, thus removing the last constraint on its ability to develop nuclear weapons and ending international monitoring of North Korea's nuclear program. The move heightened regional concern and prompted renewed diplomatic efforts, including the Six-Party Talks, to address the growing threat posed by North Korea's nuclear program.</p>
<p>2006 First Nuclear Test Conducted</p>	<p>North Korea successfully tested its first nuclear device in October 2006, verifying that it had developed nuclear weapons. The test provoked widespread international condemnation and the imposition of UN sanctions,</p>

		solidifying North Korea's status as a nuclear-armed nation and significantly escalating regional security concerns.
2009	Second Nuclear Test Conducted	North Korea conducted a second nuclear test in May 2009, which produced a larger yield than the first test and was seen as evidence of improved nuclear design following the failure of diplomatic talks with the U.S. The test triggered additional international sanctions, but North Korea continued to expand its nuclear arsenal, displaying increased confidence in its ability to independently develop nuclear capabilities regardless of diplomatic negotiations.
2012	— Missile Launch Violates International Agreements	In April 2012, North Korea launched a long-range rocket in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, demonstrating significant advances in North Korea's missile technology relevant to delivering nuclear weapons. The test further alarmed the region and reinforced international concerns that North Korea intended to pair its nuclear warheads with reliable ballistic missiles.
2013	— Third Nuclear Test Conducted	North Korea's third nuclear test occurred in February 2013 and produced a higher-yield explosion than the previous two tests, demonstrating further advancements in North Korea's nuclear capabilities. The test generated an even greater international response than the previous two tests, including even more stringent sanctions, while reaffirming North Korea's unrelenting

	pursuit of a credible and deployable nuclear deterrent.
2016 — Fourth and Fifth Nuclear Tests Conducted	North Korea conducted its fourth and fifth nuclear tests in January and September 2016, respectively, which demonstrated rapid improvements in miniaturizing nuclear warheads and standardizing warhead designs suitable for ballistic missiles. These developments greatly increased regional insecurity and indicated that North Korea was rapidly approaching operational readiness with its nuclear arsenal.
2017 — Sixth and Largest Nuclear Test Yet	North Korea claimed to have detonated a hydrogen bomb in its sixth and largest nuclear test to date in September 2017, which produced unprecedented yields. The test marked a significant jump in North Korea's destructive potential and intensified global concern, thereby concluding a period of rapid nuclear growth.
2018 — Summit Meetings Between Leaders Resume	Following years of little to no diplomatic activity between the U.S. and North Korea, leaders of both countries agreed to hold summit meetings to discuss ways to reduce tensions and negotiate denuclearization. While these meetings were largely symbolic and did not produce any tangible nuclear-related achievements, they did help to slightly improve the atmosphere and create a temporary sense of optimism regarding prospects for improving inter-Korean relations.

<p>2019 — Hanoi Summit Collapses</p>	<p>After several months of optimism generated by the series of summit meetings held between the U.S. and North Korea, those efforts came to an abrupt end when the parties were unable to agree on how to implement denuclearization measures or the terms of lifting sanctions imposed on North Korea. The collapse of the summit meetings and subsequent inability to restart dialogue represents a significant setback to efforts aimed at containing and controlling North Korea's nuclear program.</p>
<p>2022 — A Year of Unprecedented Missile Testing</p>	<p>Throughout 2022, North Korea conducted an historic number of missile tests, which included testing a variety of different types of ballistic missiles designed to deliver conventional and nuclear payloads. These tests were conducted during a period of stalemate in diplomatic talks, and highlighted North Korea's determination to develop a flexible and resilient nuclear force capable of deterring adversaries across the range of conflict scenarios.</p>

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Nuclear Capabilities

A country's ability to develop, maintain, and deploy nuclear weapons or nuclear technology.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

Weapons capable of causing large-scale death and destruction. Including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

North Korea; a state known for its nuclear weapons program and political isolation

Republic of Korea

South Korea; a democratic nation allied with the United States, located south of the DPRK.

Ballistic Missile

Missiles that follow a ballistic trajectory to deliver warheads.

UN Security Council Resolutions 1781, 2094, 2371, 2397

Legally binding UNSC decisions that imposed sanctions and demanded the halt of the DPRK's nuclear and missile activities.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

A global treaty aiming to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote peaceful nuclear cooperation.

Export bans / Sanctions

Restrictions preventing nations from selling/importing specific goods to reduce revenue for its weapons programs.

Joint military exercises

Training operations conducted by two or more allied countries to strengthen coordination and readiness.

Tactical nuclear capabilities

Nuclear weapons designed for short-range battlefield use rather than long-range strategic attacks.

Power vacuum

A situation where authority collapses and no one clearly holds power, thus typically leading to conflicts between parties seeking to acquire control of an institution, region, or nation.

Protectorates

Territories that govern themselves internally but are controlled and protected by a stronger foreign power in matters such as but not limited to defense and foreign policy.

Protectorates

Territories that govern themselves internally but are controlled and protected by a stronger foreign power in matters such as but not limited to defense and foreign policy.

De facto

Something that exists or functions in reality or practice, even if it is not officially recognized or legally established.

Strategic nuclear capabilities

Long-range nuclear weapons intended to target major military or political centers.

Agreed Framework (1994)

An agreement between the U.S. and the DPRK to freeze Pyongyang's nuclear program in exchange for energy assistance.

Yongbyon nuclear facility

The DPRK's main nuclear complex, capable of producing plutonium for weapons.

Six-Party Talks

Multilateral negotiations involving China, the DPRK, the ROK, Japan, Russia, and the USA aimed at denuclearizing the Korean peninsula.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)

Long-range missiles capable of travelling thousands of kilometers and delivering nuclear warheads.

Joint ventures ban

Sanctions prohibiting foreign businesses from forming partnerships with a specific nation's entities.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

A treaty banning all nuclear explosions; not yet in force globally.

Industrial Isotope

Radioactive forms of elements used across many sectors for non-destructive testing.

FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Arms Control Association:
[Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy, 1985-2022 | Arms Control Association](#)
2. Center for Strategic & International Studies:
[North Korea: Revisionist Ambitions and the Changing International Order](#)
3. International Atomic Energy Agency:
[Fact Sheet on DPRK Nuclear Safeguards | International Atomic Energy Agency](#)
4. Al Jazeera
[Timeline: North Korea's weaponised diplomacy | Weapons News | Al Jazeera](#)
5. The Guardian:
[North Korea escalates tensions with fresh ballistic missile tests | North Korea | The Guardian](#)
6. Radio Free Asia:
[INTERVIEW: 'North Korea could have 300 nuclear warheads within 10 years' – Radio Free Asia](#)
7. United Nations Press Releases:
[Pyongyang's Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons Continues to Undermine Global Disarmament, Non-Proliferation Regime, High Representative Warns Security Council | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#)

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ❖ How far is your country prepared to go in backing military action in response to border crossings by North or South Korea?
- ❖ Does your delegation see international economic sanctions as preferable to or as a complement to negotiating directly with both sides of the conflict for resolution of the conflict?
- ❖ Is your country taking a stance against the influence of great powers (the U.S, Russia, China) in determining the outcome of the conflict and, if so, will their influence serve your nation's interests?
- ❖ When it comes to resolutions, do you believe that the humanitarian needs of civilians or strategic military objectives should take precedence for your delegation?
- ❖ Should your delegation give serious consideration to ideological alignment (capitalist/communist) when making decisions about whether to support or oppose the conflict?
- ❖ What, if anything, is your country prepared to compromise on in order to obtain a ceasefire or long term peace, and what would represent unacceptable concessions?
- ❖ How does your delegation weigh the long term risks and benefits of being involved in resolving this issue versus remaining neutral in stance?
- ❖ How can your delegation find a way to balance national interests with international pressure from your country's allies and the UN to make a decision about the conflict?

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