
UN Security Council

North Korean Nuclear Threat

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SJPMUN XII

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A Letter From the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Hello and welcome! My name is Aidan Thorsteinsson and I am a senior and president of Model United Nations at St. John's Prep. I was born in the United States, moved to Iceland, and returned to the United States at the age of eight. I moved to Massachusetts and started school in Melrose. In middle school, I discovered my passion for golfing and fishing. Over the summer, I go to my family cottage in Iceland, where I fish, hunt, and hike. I also enjoy debates and discussions with my peers. I have been involved in Model UN since my freshmen year. I would highly advise that you come to SJPMUN XII fully prepared in order to properly represent your country. Thank you, and see you in December!

Regards,

Aidan Thorsteinsson

Committee Description

The United Nations Security Council was created on October 24, 1945 after Russia (formerly the U.S.S.R.), France, the United Kingdom, and the United States ratified the United Nations Charter. The primary goal of the United Nations Security Council is to maintain international peace and security through dispatching military operations, imposing sanctions, mandating arms inspections, and deploying election monitors (United Nations 1). In order to maintain peace and security and make sure

that hostile parties reach an agreement through peaceful means, “the Security Council may undertake investigation and mediation, appoint special envoys, set forth principles for agreement, or request the Secretary-General to use his good offices to achieve a pacific settlement of the dispute” (United Nations 2).

When a dispute becomes violent or hostile, the Security Council may issue a cease fire or dispatch military personnel and UN peacekeepers to alleviate a situation and disengage rival forces and the Security Council can additionally impose economic sanctions, blockade, or begin military action. Each permanent (United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, and Spain) and non-permanent member (The ten additional members voted onto the council in cycles) of the council has one vote and decisions on procedural matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members (United Nations 3). The United States of America, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, and China all possess the special voting ability known as “the right to veto” which can be used to override any proposal through simply casting a negative vote during voting procedure. All resolutions passed by the Security Council are deemed binding to all members of the United Nations in order to ensure peaceful, harmonious, and collegial relationships among all nations.

Statement of the Problem

Since early 2006, North Korea has posed a nuclear threat to nearby countries such as Japan and South Korea, and more recently, countries across the world. North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un has proven that he is neither afraid nor unwilling use nuclear devices if prompted to do so stating, "the days are gone forever when our enemies could blackmail us with nuclear bombs." Currently, North Korea's nuclear arsenal is composed of sixty warheads. Out of the sixty warheads at the disposal of Kim Jong Un, ten are believed to contain plutonium, twenty-seven are believed to be composed of uranium, and twenty-three are believed to contain some form of highly-enriched Uranium capable of long-range launch trajectory, reaffirming the potency of their arsenal (NTI 1).

International institutions, such as the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), have confirmed that North Korea has conducted five nuclear weapons tests, each time increasing in total yield, from one kiloton in 2006 to fifteen kilotons in 2016 (NTI 1). North Korea clearly possesses the ability, if prompted, to launch and guide a nuclear weapon all over the earth, except for the East Coast of the United States, Latin America, Western Africa, and Antarctica, according to the Nuclear Threat Initiative. Many economic sanctions have been implemented and some of these sanctions include but are not limited to restrictions to imports and exports, restrictions in food aid, and restrictions in the amount of energy North Korea can output.

Additionally, minimal restrictions can be specifically applied to North Korea's nuclear program, as North Korea is recognized as a sovereign nation, and intervention can only be utilized as seen fit by the nation state. The increasingly disconcerting rhetoric between North Korea's Kim Jong Un and The United States's Donald Trump has shed light onto The People's Republic's Nuclear capabilities. The Security Council must take diplomatic initiatives to quell the threat of mass destruction of not only Asia, but the entire world, while ensuring that the sovereignty of North Korea, a country that rescinded its signature of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, remains respected.

History of the Problem

North Korea's began its nuclear development in the early 1950s, developing the institutional capabilities to train personnel to develop nuclear devices. In December 1952, the government established the Atomic Energy Research Institute and the Academy of Sciences, but nuclear work only began to progress when North Korea established cooperative agreements with the Soviet Union. (NTI 1). North Korea cofounded the Soviet Union's Nuclear research facility, the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in February, 1956, sending both funding and personnel to train in the research center. In the early 1960s, the Soviet Union provided extensive technical assistance to North Korea in constructing the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center, which included the installation of a Soviet IRT-2000 nuclear re-

search reactor and associated facilities. North Korea used this small research reactor to “produce radioisotopes and to train personnel.” (NTI 2)

By the early 1970s, North Korean engineers were using indigenous technology to expand the IRT-2000 research reactor, and Pyongyang had begun to acquire plutonium reprocessing technology from the Soviet Union (NTI 3). Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, North Korea continued internal expansion of nuclear programs on both the civilian and military level. The country began uranium development and continued to work towards developing nuclear devices in the IRT-2000 research reactor. In 1985, North Korea signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a treaty aimed at preventing the spreading of nuclear weapons and devices. The NPT restricts North Korea’s ability to continue harvesting excess amounts of Uranium, hindering their ability to further their arsenal of nuclear weapons. In 1993, The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) demanded that inspectors be given access to two nuclear waste storage sites and in response, North Korea threatened to disavow the NPT, but eventually opted to continue participating in the treaty, but refused to allow inspectors to observe reactors.

In 1994, North Korea and the United States signed an agreement in which North Korea agreed to dismantle its old, graphite-moderated nuclear reactors in exchange for international aid to build two new light-water nuclear reactors (NTI 4). From 1994 to 2003, North Korea’s nuclear program seemingly remained dormant, with the UNSC claiming its right of ad hoc inspections of any nu-

clear reactors under North Korea's control. However, in 2003, international intelligence detected activity in a radiochemistry laboratory, a reprocessing facility in Yongbyon, which indicated that North Korea was probably reprocessing the 8,000 spent fuel rods that had been in a temporary storage pond.

With this new discovery, North Korea was forced to shut down its 5MW(e) reactor in April 2005. The international community utilized multilateral monitoring of the reactor in order to ensure that it would remain dormant. United States and United Kingdom used satellite imagery to closely monitor activity in and around the reactor site. However, Satellite imagery showed that in July 2005, just 3 months after it claimed to close down the reactor site, North Korea began utilizing the 5MW(e) site yet again.

On September 19, 2005, the fourth round of Six-Party (North Korea, United States, China, South Korea, Russia, Japan) talks concluded and the six parties signed a Statement of Principles, whereby North Korea would abandon its nuclear programs and return to the NPT and the IAEA safeguards regime at "an early date" (NTI 5). However, due to disagreements regarding the economic sanctions to be put in place, the Six-Party Talks stalemated, and the Statement of Principles remained dormant for more than 18 months. In October of 2006, North Korea domestically tested its first nuclear weapon, producing a yield of less than 1 kiloton. Immediately following the test, UNSC Resolution 1718 imposed sanctions on North Korea. After intense diplomatic pressures by the Chinese government and others involved in the Six-Party process, the parties met again in December 2006 (NTI 6).

After negotiations that continued into 2006, the six parties ratified the Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement, whereby North Korea agreed to abandon all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, and to return to the NPT and the IAEA safeguards regimen, in exchange for a package of incentives that included the provision of energy assistance to North Korea by the other parties (NTI 7). However, the agreement merely lasted four years, and on May 25, 2009, North Korea conducted its second nuclear test, generating a reading of 4.7 on the richter scale, much stronger than the previous test. In March 2010, North Korea announced the construction of a light-water reactor (LWR) at Yongbyon (NTI 8). However, in 2011, North Korea yet again announced a moratorium on nuclear testing, uranium enrichment, and long-range missile tests in exchange for food aid (NTI 7).

North Korea continues to make false promises to end their entire nuclear program in order to receive food aid to provide to their starving citizens, however, once this aid is received, North Korea's cycle of nuclear research and testing continues. As tensions between the six parties rose over the next two years, Pyongyang conducted a third nuclear test, this time registering a 5.1 magnitude seismic shock. On January 6, 2016 North Korea announced it had successfully tested a thermonuclear device at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site (NTI 10). On September 9, 2016, North Korea carried out a fifth nu-

clear test. [87] The U.S. Geological Survey registered the test as a 5.3 magnitude earthquake, producing a yield of approximately 15 kilotons (NTI 5).

Since North Korea conducted its fifth test, further economic sanctions and restrictions have been imposed on the regime, such as restrictions on the importation of goods from China, their main economic ally, and restrictions on the amount of metallurgical products, North Korea's main export, can be shipped overseas. North Korea continues to defy the UNSC, seemingly ignoring the implications these economic sanctions are having on their country.

Questions to Consider

1. Does North Korea, as a sovereign nation, unrestricted by the NPT, possess the right to continue its nuclear development programs?
2. To what extent will the continued implementation of economic restrictions and sanctions hinder North Korea from continuing to develop and hone their nuclear capabilities?
3. What actions can the UN Security Council in order to ensure that military action will not be necessary when addressing North Korea's nuclear program.
4. What diplomatic actions can members of the Security Council take to coerce North Korean leaders to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?

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5. How can member states prevent attacks on North Korea's nearby countries, such as South Korea and Japan, while still maintaining economic and diplomatic pressure on the People's Republic?

Bloc Positions

Countries that are opposed to North Korea's nuclear program and willing to take diplomatic action to restrict the program's development:

France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Uruguay, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, South Korea, Ireland, Turkey, Mexico, Canada, Bolivia

Countries unclear about whether they are opposed or sympathetic to North Korea's nuclear program and unclear about the diplomatic action they are willing to take:

Ethiopia, Egypt, Ukraine, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal

Countries sympathetic to North Korea's nuclear program and hesitant to take diplomatic actions to restrict program's development:

China, Russia, Bulgaria, Benin, Madagascar

Research

I would recommend that, before our committee meets, you utilize the following link that provides an insightful and in-depth overview of North Korea's Nuclear Research, Programs, Tests, and Global Implications. The Nuclear Threat Initiative, through extensive research, provides detailed information regarding the Nuclear capabilities and policies of not only North Korea, but also whatever country you will represent.

<http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/north-korea/>

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