



Security Council Topic Background Guide

Topic 2: The Situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea¹

September 13, 2012

According to Chapter VI of the UN Charter, the Security Council “may investigate any dispute, or any situation which may lead to international friction or give rise to dispute, in order to determine if either the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.”²

Since the UN was founded in 1945, the Security Council has been concerned with the situation on the Korean peninsula. In 1950, the Security Council authorized a US-led coalition of states to reverse the North Korean invasion of South Korea. Although the Korean War ended in 1953, no peace treaty has ever been signed, and relations between North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) and South Korea (the Republic of Korea, ROK) have remained tense.

Today, the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the two countries is one of the most heavily fortified places on Earth. North Korea is thought to have about 1 million soldiers, while South Korea has about 650,000 active-duty soldiers assisted by about 25,000 US Army and Air Force troops.³ Due to decades of economic sanctions and lack of economic development, the North Korean military is weak compared to that of highly-industrialized South Korea and the US. But in 2006 and 2009, the DPRK conducted nuclear weapons tests, demonstrating the ability to make nuclear weapons and therefore retaliate for attacks on its territory.⁴ Today the DPRK may have as many as 10 nuclear weapons.⁵

Although the ROK military is more sophisticated than the DPRK's and although the US also has nuclear weapons (about 8,000, of which about 2,000 are operational),⁶ North Korea has occasionally carried out small attacks on South Korean territory and military forces, most recently, in 2009 and 2010. In addition, since the death of his father in December 2011, the new North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, has tested a satellite and has apparently begun construction of a new nuclear reactor.⁷

At the same time, however, there are signs of change in the North Korean government's approach. The DPRK and Japan recently met for the first time in several years, suggesting that the DPRK may be interested in diversifying its international ties away from China, its traditional patron. In addition, although Kim Jong-un has

¹ This background guide was written by Karen Ruth Adams, MMUN faculty advisor, and Kedra Hildebrand, research assistant. Copyright 2012 by Karen Ruth Adams.

² “Charter of the United Nations,” Chapter VI, Article 34, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter6.shtml>

³ International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2012* (London: IISS, 2012), pp. 257, 259, and 262.

⁴ BBC, “North Korean Nuclear Tests,” 24 April 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17823706>

⁵ Federation of American Scientists (FAS), “Status of World Nuclear Forces 2012,” <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html>

⁶ FAS, “Status of World Nuclear Forces 2012.”

⁷ “Times Topic: North Korea,” *New York Times*, 31 August 2012, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/northkorea/index.html?offset=0&s=newest>

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said that he will continue his father's and grandfather's "military first" policy,⁸ he has expressed a desire for North Korea to become a "strong and prosperous nation" and has provided evidence of that desire by permitting construction of a trilateral gas pipeline to carry Russian natural gas to South Korea⁹ and by sending 200 officials and 40,000 technicians, seamstresses and mechanics to China to learn about modern industrial organization.¹⁰

In 2012, for the first time, North Korean citizens of the "hermit kingdom" have seen their president enjoying aspects of Western culture, including a Mickey Mouse performance and a concert featuring the theme from "Rocky." There are also signs that the DPRK's harsh approach to human rights may be loosening. Citizens have been told the name of the president's wife and have been allowed to see her picture, and women have been allowed to wear pants in public.¹¹ International observers have also noticed that citizens in the capital city, Pyongyang, appear healthier than they have for many years, perhaps due to the introduction of private farming and farmers markets since 2002, which has reduced the food shortages that are thought to have killed 2 million people.¹²

These diplomatic, economic, and social changes in the DPRK suggest that the time may be nearing when the 62-year old Korean conflict could be brought to a close. How could the Council make this possibility a reality and restore international peace and security on the Korean peninsula?

History and Current Events

To understand the contemporary situation in the DPRK and on the Korean peninsula, it is important to understand their history. From 918 to 1905, the Korean peninsula was ruled by a single, independent government. In 1905, Japan occupied Korea and ran it as a colony, extracting land, labor, and natural resources. Japanese rule lasted until the end of World War II in 1945, when the Soviet Union (USSR) invaded from the north and the US invaded from the south, pushing Japan out of the area.

The US and the USSR agreed that each would occupy part of the peninsula until elections for a unified Korean government could be held. But in 1948, this agreement broke down. The South held elections and, with US approval, declared an independent state, the Republic of Korea (ROK). In return, the North proclaimed its independence as the DPRK.¹³

During the Cold War, the US supported the ROK and the USSR supported the DPRK. The effects of US-Soviet rivalry were so profound that neither North Korea nor South Korea joined the UN until 1991, when the end of the Cold War assured that neither the US nor Russia would veto their ascension. Since the end of the Cold War, the DPRK has become very isolated. Today it is often described as the "last Stalinist state on earth."¹⁴

The first leader of the DPRK was Kim Il-Sung, who fought the Japanese in Korea and Manchuria. He was installed by the Soviets in 1946 and became the prime minister when Soviet troops withdrew in 1948.¹⁵ The first

⁸ "Times Topic: North Korea," *New York Times*.

⁹ "North Korea," CIA World Factbook, August 24, 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>

¹⁰ Blaine Harden, "North Korea's Extreme Makeover," *Foreign Policy*, July 26, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/26/north_korea_s_extreme_makeover

¹¹ Harden, "North Korea's Extreme Makeover."

¹² "North Korea," CIA World Factbook.

¹³ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-2006*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

¹⁴ "Times Topic: North Korea," *New York Times*.

¹⁵ "North Korea Timeline: Chronology of Key Events 1945-2006," *International Debates*, November 2006, p. 2.

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leader of the ROK was Syngman Rhee, who had studied in the US and was an anti-Japanese activist during the occupation period. He was appointed head of the provisional government by the US and elected president in 1948.¹⁶

In 1950, the DPRK invaded the South to reunify the peninsula, and the Korean War began. During the war, the North Koreans were supported by the USSR and People's Republic of China (PRC). South Korea was supported by the US, UK, Canada, the Philippines, and several other states. Support for the ROK was authorized by Security Council Resolution 82, which passed without Soviet veto because the USSR was boycotting the Council.¹⁷

The fighting ended in 1953 under an armistice agreement signed by the UN, the DPRK and China. South Korea refused to sign the armistice, citing frustration that Korea was to remain divided by North and South. But it did agree to abide by the terms. Under the armistice, both sides withdrew two kilometers from the border on the 38th parallel, creating what is today known as the demilitarized zone (DMZ).¹⁸ No peace treaty has ever been signed.

Kim Il-Sung's political philosophy was "Juche," or self-reliance. It articulated a desire for the DPRK to be completely independent from other states in the international system. In implementing this philosophy, the DPRK has become "one of the world's most secretive societies,"¹⁹ which has made it difficult for other states and organizations such as the UN to know what is happening within its borders. This is true in all dimensions of life – political, economic, social, and military.

Nuclear Program

The DPRK's military secrecy has been of special concern because from 1979 to its first nuclear test in 2006, it was unclear whether the country was trying to develop nuclear reactors for energy purposes or for both energy and nuclear weapons.

In 1979, North Korea started to build a 5-megawatt nuclear reactor at Yongbyon with Soviet nuclear help. In December 1985, North Korea declared the existence of the Yongbyon facility to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the oversight body for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and joined the NPT.²⁰

According to the NPT, the only legal nuclear weapons states are those that had declared nuclear programs when the Treaty was written in 1968, namely the United States (which developed nuclear weapons in 1945), Russia (1949), United Kingdom (1953), France (1964), and China (1964). All other state parties to the Treaty agreed to pursue nuclear programs only for energy, not for weapons. In exchange, the five existing nuclear states promised to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to ... nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."²¹

In 1992, North Korea agreed to allow inspections by the IAEA, but refused to allow access to certain sites that were suspected of nuclear weapons production.²²

¹⁶ LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War*.

¹⁷ The Soviets were boycotting because the US refused to transfer China's UN membership from the nationalist Chinese government, which controlled only Taiwan, to the communist government that took over the mainland in 1949. LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War*.

¹⁸ "North Korea Timeline: Chronology of Key Events 1945-2006."

¹⁹ "Country Profile: North Korea," BBC News, June 10, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1131421.stm

²⁰ "Timeline: North Korea Nuclear Threats, Climb-downs, Tests," *Reuters*, 21:19, May 24, 2009.

²¹ "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons," UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2002, Articles II, IV, VI, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Treaties/npt.html>

²² "North Korea Timeline: Chronology of Key Events 1945-2006."

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In 1994, Kim Il-Sung died and Kim Jong-Il, his son, succeeded him as North Korea's leader. Soon after, North Korea and the US signed an agreement in which the DPRK pledged to halt and eventually dismantle its nuclear weapons program in exchange for, among other things, international aid to build two nuclear power plants.²³ The agreement is known as the "Agreed Framework."²⁴ In 1998, in violation of the Agreed Framework, North Korea launched a rocket that flew over Japan before landing in the Pacific Ocean. In 2001, the DPRK threatened to restart its nuclear weapons program if the US did not keep its promises under the Agreed Framework.

In 2002, US President George W. Bush warned that the US would use military force to destroy any effort to obtain nuclear weapons, and he called North Korea part of the "Axis of Evil," along with Iraq and Iran.²⁵ North Korea reacted by saying that the U.S. was "little short of declaring war" and disclosing that it was working on and would not halt a uranium enrichment program.²⁶ When the U.S., Japan, and South Korea retaliated by halting fuel oil shipments, North Korea sent IAEA inspectors home, withdrew from the NPT, and announced it was restarting the plutonium reactor at Yongbyon.²⁷

These events led to the first of a series of Six-Party Talks including North Korea, the US, Russia, China, Japan and South Korea. These talks were held in Beijing as a sign of China's increased concern over the DPRK's growing nuclear ambitions. The aim of the Six-Party Talks was to "obtain a full declaration of nuclear materials from Pyongyang (including highly enriched uranium, plutonium, and nuclear devices) and the disablement of all North Korea nuclear facilities and activities."²⁸

When the talks stalled in February 2005, the DPRK Foreign Ministry declared that North Korea had manufactured nuclear weapons. In March, the DPRK declared that it was a nuclear weapons state.²⁹ According to the government, the DPRK built nuclear weapons for "self-defense" against the US, Japan, and South Korea.³⁰

In September 2005, in response to a "balanced package" devised in the Six-Party talks, the DPRK agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons program and rejoin the NPT. This package addressed the "security needs of North Korea as well as the concerns of the international community about North Korea's nuclear activities."³¹

²³ Robert Gallucci, "The Agreed Framework: Advancing U.S. Interests with North Korea," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 5:50, December 12, 1994: 820-823.

²⁴ "Agreed Framework Between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) official website, October 21, 1994, <http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/AgreedFramework.pdf>

²⁵ George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address,," January 29, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>

²⁶ North Korea's official state newspaper as quoted in PBS Frontline's chronology for "Kim's Nuclear Gamble," <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/etc/cron.html>

²⁷ For the full text of the DPRK explanation for withdrawal, see "KCNA 'Detailed Report' Explains NPT Withdrawal," January 22, 2003, FBIS Translated Text, Federation of American Scientists website, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/dprk012203.html>

²⁸ Victor Cha, "Winning Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 86:6, November/December 2007: 98-113.

²⁹ "Timeline: North Korea's Nuclear Test," *New York Times*, November 27, 2006, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/northkorea/index.html?8qa>

³⁰ Michael Duffy, "What Does North Korea Want?" *Time*, February 13, 2005, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1027498,00.html> See also Karen Ruth Adams and Kimberly Hannon, "North Korea Raises the Stakes," WIIS Issue Brief, Winter 2007, http://www12.georgetown.edu/sfs/cpass/wiis/documents/Winter_2007_3.pdf

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Despite this agreement, in October 2006, North Korea demonstrated its nuclear weapons capability by conducting a test.³² In 2006, the Natural Resources Defense Council estimated that North Korea had ten nuclear weapons and the capability to manufacture one per year.³³ Today, there is little question that the DPRK has nuclear weapons. Now, questions center on whether the DPRK plans to use them against other states or sell them to other states or to terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda.

In 2007, in response to economic aid offered by members of the Six-Party talks, North Korea agreed to shut down the Yongbyon nuclear reactor and allow UN nuclear inspectors back into the country. But in 2008, the government threatened to stop disabling the facility unless the US took the DPRK off its terrorist watch list. It had been on the list since 1988, when DPRK agents were involved in the bombing of a South Korean airliner. The US agreed to drop the DPRK from the list.³⁴

In early 2009, North Korea launched a multistage rocket, said it would quit nuclear talks, and threatened to conduct a nuclear test and intercontinental ballistic missile test. In May 2009, it conducted a nuclear test and tested both long range and mid-range missiles over Japan. The DPRK promised to continue such acts until the Security Council lifts all sanctions.³⁵

North Korea's Record of Military Attacks and Preparations

In recent years, the DPRK has taken some surprising military risks, given its weakness compared to the US and South Korea. Several of the events have occurred at sea:

--In 2009, a North Korean ship entered part of the Yellow Sea claimed by South Korea. South Korea "pounded it with thousands of rounds of gunfire, disabling it and killing at least one sailor."³⁶

--In March 2010, an explosion sunk a South Korean naval vessel called the Cheonan, killing 46 sailors. According to South Korea and experts from the UK, Australia, Canada, and Sweden, the cause of the explosion was a North Korean torpedo attack. North Korea denied any role in the incident and threatened to wage "all-out-war" if attacked as a result of "speculation" regarding the incident.³⁷

³¹ "UN Nuclear Watchdog Hopes to Send Inspectors Back to the DPR of Korea Soon," UN News Center, September 19, 2005, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=15881&Cr=dpr&Cr1=korea>

³² "North Korea Timeline: Chronology of Key Events 1945-2006."

³³ Natural Resources Defense Council, "Nuclear Notebook: Global nuclear stockpiles, 1945-2006," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 62:4 (July/August 2006), pp. 64-67, <http://thebulletin.metapress.com/content/c4120650912x74k7/fulltext.pdf>

³⁴ "North Korea Timeline: Chronology of Key Events 1945-2006." Peter Finn, "U.S. to Weigh Returning North Korea to Terror List," *Washington Post*, June 8, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/07/AR2009060700717.html>

³⁵ "Timeline: North Korea Nuclear Threats, Climb-downs, Tests."

³⁶ "Factbox: What is the Korean Northern Limit Line?," Reuters, November 23, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/23/us-korea-north-nll-idUSTRE6AM2O820101123>

³⁷ "The Cheonan," *New York Times*, May 20, 2010, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/c/cheonan_ship/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier

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Other North Korean attacks have occurred on land:

-- In October 2010, North Korean soldiers fired shots across the DMZ at South Korean forces, who returned fire. No casualties were reported.³⁸

--In November 2010, the DPRK attacked a South Korean island with “dozens” of artillery shells, killing two soldiers, wounding 15 soldiers and three civilians, and setting fire to many buildings. According to North Korea, the attack was provoked by a South Korean military exercise. South Korea denied that any of the artillery it fired in the exercise hit DPRK territory and responded to the attack by shelling North Korean gun positions.³⁹ According to a spokesman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (who is South Korean), the North’s attack on Yeonpyeong island was “one of the gravest incidents since the end of the Korean War.”⁴⁰

In addition to these attacks on the ROK, the DPRK continues to test missile technology that could be used to deliver nuclear warheads across the border into South Korea or across the sea to Japan and beyond. In April 2012, the new DPRK leader, Kim Jong-un, refused to bow to international pressure – including from China -- to cancel the launch of a satellite.⁴¹ When the launch failed, he took the unusual step of admitting the failure to the North Korean people.⁴² Two weeks later, the DPRK held a military parade featuring new “missiles” that German weapons experts later speculated were decoys.⁴³ Since April, there have been signs that the DPRK is building a new nuclear reactor that could be used to enrich plutonium and uranium to make additional nuclear weapons.⁴⁴

North Korea’s Relationships with Other “Rogue” Regimes

North Korea has not only been criticized for its military buildup and attacks on South Korea. It has also been suspected of helping other states to obtain nuclear and other weapons. The best-documented allegation of this sort pertains to Syria. According to the *New York Times*, in Spring 2007, US President George W. Bush “was told by the Israelis that North Korea was helping Syria build a nuclear reactor; before the Syrians or the North Koreans were confronted with that evidence, Israel sent bombers on a secret mission to destroy the Syrian plant. The North Koreans have never explained their role.”⁴⁵

³⁸ Chico Harlan, “North, South Korea trade shots; no injuries,” *Washington Post*, October 29, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/29/AR2010102901523.html>

³⁹ Mark McDonald, ‘Crisis Status’ in South Korea After North Shells Island,” *New York Times*, November 23, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/world/asia/24korea.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=print

⁴⁰ “Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the Korean Peninsula,” 23 November 2010, <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=4948>

⁴¹ “Times Topic: North Korea,” *New York Times*.

⁴² Choe Sang-Hun and David E. Sanger, “Rocket Failure May Be Test of North Korean Leader’s Power,” *New York Times*, 13 April 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/14/world/asia/international-condemnation-follows-north-koreas-failed-rocket-launch.html?ref=northkorea>

⁴³ Choe Sang-Hun, “New North Korean Missile Is Called Into Question,” *New York Times*, 27 April 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/27/world/asia/new-north-korean-missile-is-called-into-question.html?ref=northkorea>

⁴⁴ Choe Sang-Hun, “Progress Is Cited on New Reactor in North Korea,” *New York Times*, 21 August 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/22/world/asia/progress-on-new-nuclear-reactor-in-north-korea.html?ref=northkorea>

⁴⁵ David E. Sanger, “Kim Jong-il, Dictator Who Turned North Korea Into a Nuclear State, Dies,” *New York Times*, 18 December 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/19/world/asia/Kim-Jong-il-Dictator-Who-Turned-North-Korea-Into-a-Nuclear-State-Dies.html?pagewanted=all>

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In November 2011, the German newspaper *Die Welt*, reported that North Korea has supplied Syria and Iran with maraging steel, which is used to strengthen missiles and nuclear centrifuges.⁴⁶ But a May 2012 report from the Security Council sub-committee charged with monitoring compliance with North Korean sanctions found no evidence to suggest that North Korea has the ability to manufacture maraging steel.⁴⁷

The sub-committee did, however, find evidence of two conventional weapons-related shipments from North Korea to Syria. The first, in 2007, was a shipment of propellant that originated in North Korea and stopped en route to Syria in China and Malaysia. The second shipment, in 2010, contained brass, copper, and aluminum that could be used to make artillery and rockets. The sub-committee also found that North Korea shipped conventional arms to Myanmar. Shipments to and from North Korea of weapons and materials used to make weapons violate sanctions the Security Council enacted after North Korea tested nuclear devices in 2006 and 2009.⁴⁸

Human Rights

The secretive and closed nature of the DPRK makes it hard to know what life is for North Korean citizens. Kim Jong-un uses the state-controlled press much like his father to announce that there are no human rights issues.⁴⁹ According to the government, citizens are part of a “great harmonious family” and have universal access to food, housing, education, and medical services.⁵⁰

In the last year, an additional 20,000 North Korea troops have apparently been sent to the Chinese border to capture citizens trying to flee the country. According to human rights organizations, five detention camps with 135,000-200,000 prisoners are visible in satellite images on Google Earth. According to escapees, inmates are subject to torture, public execution, slave labor, forced abortion, and infanticide,⁵¹ as well as starvation, unrelenting work, and forced marriage to produce children for servitude. Some inmates were taken from their homes at night and learned of their crimes only after months or years of incarceration.⁵²

Previous Committee Work on This Topic

The situation in the DPRK troubles the Security Council for three reasons. First, under the NPT, only states that had nuclear weapons in 1968 are allowed to be nuclear powers. North Korea’s withdrawal from the NPT in 2003 is a precedent that the permanent five members of the Council (all of which have nuclear weapons) worry that others will emulate. The DPRK is not the only country to have violated the terms of the NPT. Since 1970, a number of states -- including Israel, India, and Pakistan -- have developed or otherwise obtained nuclear weapons.⁵³

⁴⁶ Yossi Melman, “North Korea supplying Syria, Iran with prohibited nuclear technology, report says,” *Haaretz*, 28 November 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/north-korea-supplying-syria-iran-with-prohibited-nuclear-technology-report-says-1.398295>

⁴⁷ Louis Charbonneau and Michelle Nichols, “Exclusive: U.N. probes possible North Korea arms trade with Syria, Myanmar,” Reuters, 17 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/18/us-korea-north-sanctions-idUSBRE84G1KI20120518>

⁴⁸ Charbonneau and Nichols, “Exclusive: U.N. probes possible North Korea arms trade with Syria, Myanmar.”

⁴⁹ Harden, “North Korea’s Extreme Makeover.”

⁵⁰ “Statement by H.E. Mr. Kim Pyong Sik At the World Summit for Social Development,” World Summit for Social Development at the United Nations, March 11-12, 1995, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/gov/950311140848.htm>

⁵¹ “Country Profile: North Korea.”

⁵² “North Korea Prison Camp Drawing Show Abuses,” The Huffington Post, June 25, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/25/north-korea-prison-camp-d_n_1624748.html

⁵³ Natural Resources Defense Council, “Nuclear Notebook.”

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India has been especially vocal about the legitimacy of its nuclear arsenal, referring to the fact that the US, Russia, and other authorized nuclear weapons states have never fulfilled their promise to disarm.⁵⁴

Second, Security Council members are concerned that the DPRK could inspire other states to develop nuclear weapons and could transfer nuclear weapons, plans, or materials to others. Of particular concern is the spread of nuclear weapons to states such as Syria and Iran and to terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda. This concern is especially acute given the DPRK's economic problems, which might induce it to sell nuclear technology or weapons.⁵⁵

Third, North Korea's recent attacks on South Korea reminded the Council of the unresolved situation on the Korean peninsula and the potential for devastation should a war break out, since both North Korea and South Korea's ally, the US, have nuclear weapons.

In response to these concerns, the Security Council has passed a series of resolutions to address nuclear non-proliferation, in general, and the situation in the DPRK, in particular:

-- S/RES/1540 (April 2004) affirmed that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is a threat to international peace; that the international community must take action against that threat; and that all member states have a responsibility to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction by creating and enforcing laws and measures to prevent the manufacture, acquisition, possession, development, transportation, and transfer of WMD and their delivery systems.⁵⁶

-- S/RES/1695 (July 2006) was adopted after North Korea tested long-range and medium-range missiles over the Sea of Japan. It condemned the missile launches, called for a suspension of all activities related to the ballistic missile program, and urged the DPRK to return to the Six-Party Talks.⁵⁷

-- S/RES/1718 (October 2006) was adopted after the DPRK's first nuclear test, which demonstrated that it had nuclear weapons. In this resolution, the Council noted that the "proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitute a threat to international peace and security" and decided that the DPRK should "abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner." The resolution imposed sanctions against the country and individuals supporting its military program. Finally, the Council demanded that North Korea retract its withdrawal from the NPT and accept supervision of its nuclear plants by the IAEA. This resolution passed unanimously.⁵⁸ The imposition of sanctions was especially significant because it signaled that the P-5 members were in agreement about the need for enforcement. But the Council was able to agree to impose sanctions on just a few items.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid." *Foreign Affairs* 77:5 (September/October 1998), pp. 41-52, <http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/09/980900-js-fa.htm>

⁵⁵ United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Decides All States Shall Act to Prevent Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Weapons," Security Council Press Release (SC/8076), April 28, 2004, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sc8076.doc.htm>

⁵⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, April 28, 2005, [http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1540%20\(2004\)](http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1540%20(2004))

⁵⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1695, July 15, 2006, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006_09/NKMissileTest#Sidebar1

⁵⁸ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718, October 14, 2006, http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaDprk/unsres_14102006.pdf

⁵⁹ "Security Council Imposes Sanctions on DPR Korea After its Claimed Nuclear Test," UN News Center, October 14, 2006, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20261&Cr=DPRK&Cr1=>

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-- S/RES/1874 (June 2009) unanimously condemned North Korea's second nuclear test and imposed tougher sanctions on the DPRK's export of weapons and other military hardware and import of weapons and luxury goods. The Council demanded that the DPRK "not conduct any further nuclear tests or launch any ballistic missile technology" and restated its determination for the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons program.⁶⁰

In June 2012, for the first time in some years, China allowed the report of the panel of experts (POE) that assists the sub-committee that monitors North Korean compliance with the sanctions to be made public. The POE identified previous North Korean non-compliance with the sanctions but no new evidence of non-compliance. The POE is made up of the five permanent members of the Security Council, plus Japan and South Korea. According to Pakistan and Guatemala, more progress could be made on the situation in North Korea if membership in the POE were revised to incorporate additional UN member states.⁶¹

Due to dissent (especially from China),⁶² the Security Council has not passed a resolution regarding North Korea since 2009 (except for annual resolutions extending and reappointing the POE). Instead, the Council has issued presidential statements condemning North Korean actions such as the failed 2012 satellite launch and the 2010 attacks on the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong island.⁶³ Presidential statements are issued by the member state serving as the rotating president of the Security Council, with the consent of all members. Unlike Security Council resolutions, presidential statements are not binding on UN member states.

Conclusion

The situation in North Korea may be at a turning point. After years of Security Council dissent about criticizing the DPRK, glimmers of agreement emerged in April 2012, when China pressured North Korea not to launch a satellite, and again in June 2012, when China allowed the POE report to be released. In addition, after years of North Korean closure and preoccupation with military strength, there are tentative signs that the government is moving towards greater international openness, economic development and perhaps even some respect for human rights.

How could the Security Council capitalize on this moment to defuse tensions and build a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula? In developing your country's position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- Does your country have nuclear energy and/or nuclear weapons? Has it ratified – and is it in compliance with -- the NPT?
- What relationship does your country have with the DPRK and with the permanent-five members of the Security Council? Consider diplomatic, economic, and military relations.
- How has your country reacted to the situation in North Korea? Has it supported and/or been affected by the Security Council sanctions? How would it be affected by military strikes by or against North Korea?
- What should the Security Council's priority be: to force the DPRK to disarm, encourage it to stop developing and testing missiles, deter it from further attacks on South Korea, prevent it from selling nuclear and other technology, and/or reward it for the steps it has made towards greater openness?

⁶⁰ "Tougher UN Sanctions on DPRK Korea Send 'Clear and Strong' Message-Ban," UN News Center, June 12, 2009, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31133&Cr=dprk&Cr1=>

⁶¹ Security Council Report, "August 2012 Monthly Forecast: DPRK (North Korea)," 1 August 2012, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2012-08/dprk_north_korea.php

⁶² David Sanger and Thom Shanker, "The Pentagon and U.N. Chief Put New Pressure on North Korea," *New York Times*, May 24, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/25/world/asia/25korea.html>

⁶³ For easy access to the Council's resolutions and presidential statements on North Korea, go to Security Council Report, "UN Documents for DPRK (North Korea)," <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/dprk-north-korea/>

Recommended Reading

Federation of American Scientists. "Weapons of Mass Destruction Resources." Website. Available at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/>

The FAS is a well-respected source of information on nuclear weapons issues, both technical and political.

Harden, Blaine. "North Korea's Extreme Makeover." *Foreign Policy*. July 26, 2012. Available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/26/north_korea_s_extreme_makeover

This article provides an overview of what is known about Kim Jong-Un and speculates about what the future holds for government and people of the DPRK.

Litwak, Robert S. "Living With Nuclear Outliers." *New York Times*. 25 June 2012. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/opinion/living-with-nuclear-outliers.html?_r=2&ref=nuclearprogram

In this article, a former US policy maker argues that it is necessary to maintain the sanctions against the DPRK and other states that are in violation of the NPT. For earlier statements in the long-running debate about policy options facing the international community, see the source in footnote 54 and the second source in footnote 30.

Niksch, Larry. "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program." CRS Report for Congress: Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division. RL33590. 5 October 2006. Available at [http://pards.org/crs_country/CRSReportNorthKorea'sNuclearWeaponsProgram\(October5,2006\)Update.pdf](http://pards.org/crs_country/CRSReportNorthKorea'sNuclearWeaponsProgram(October5,2006)Update.pdf)

This article discusses the Six-Party Talks and North Korea's motivation for seeking nuclear weapons.

"North Korea: Overview." *New York Times*. Website. Available at <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/northkorea/index.html>

This site provides up-to-date information about the DPRK, with links to new stories and other reports.

"Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons." (2002). UN Department for Disarmament Affairs. Available at <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>

This site provides the text of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a list of states that have ratified it, and information on the nuclear activities of most countries in the world and UN efforts to oversee them.

UN Security Council. "1540 Committee." Available at <http://www.un.org/sc/1540/>

Security Council Resolution 1540 (April 28, 2005) is the basis for Security Council action against states that pursue WMD technology. The 1540 Committee collects information about state compliance with the resolution. For more detailed information on North Korean sanctions, see also the source in footnote 63.