



SRMUN CHARLOTTE 2021

Unity: Coming Together to Address a Changing World

March 26 - 28, 2021

sc_charlotte@srmun.org

Security Council Update No. 1

International Security Implications of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Introduction

Issues involving the Korean peninsula have plagued endeavors of the United Nations (UN) since its conception.¹ The first UN peace enforcement mission took place on the Korean Peninsula from 1950 to 1953.² The peace enforcement mission ended in an armistice, establishing the demarcation line between two independent states: the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).³ Through the Cold War, the DPRK remained isolated as the Kim regime, started by Kim Il-Sung in 1948, flourished in the Member State under Kim Jong-il.⁴ The practices of the Kim regime, however, have placed the Member State under great international scrutiny.⁵ Towards the end of the Cold War, the DPRK actively pursued nuclear capabilities at the expense of the wellbeing of its citizens.⁶ Despite these international concerns, the DPRK was formally admitted to the UN in 1991.⁷ Since gaining membership, relations between the UN and the DPRK have been unfruitful, as the UN Security Council (SC) has placed nine sanctions on the DPRK in response to the Member State's nuclear program.⁸ The nuclear program is the primary bargaining chip used throughout DPRK foreign policy efforts, often used as a short term solution to negotiate international aid.⁹ The DPRK has placed the international community in a difficult situation, forcing the UN to choose between nuclear nonproliferation and humanitarian assistance.¹⁰ The security implications of either choice have grave consequences for allies and enemies.

DPRK Foreign Relations with Northeast Asia

Despite the Member State's isolationism, the DPRK has established formal diplomatic relations with 164 Member States.¹¹ However, most of these Member States do not have ambassadors or diplomatic missions to the DPRK.¹²

¹ Wilson Center Digital Archive. "Korea at the United Nations." Accessed December 15, 2020.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/130/korea-at-the-united-nations>. (Accessed December 15th, 2020).

² Bellamy, Alex J., and Paul Williams. "Chapter 9. Peace Enforcement." In *Understanding Peacekeeping*. 2nd ed. 214-229. Cambridge: Polity, 2011.

³ Bellamy, Alex J., and Paul Williams. "Chapter 9. Peace Enforcement." In *Understanding Peacekeeping*.

⁴ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 1. Contradictions." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 3rd ed., 1-18. HarperCollins, 2018.

⁵ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 1. Contradictions." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁶ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 1. Contradictions." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁷ United Nations General Assembly. "Admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to Membership in the United Nations." United Nations, September 17, 1991.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/UNMembers%20ARES%2046%201.pdf>. (Accessed December 15, 2020)

⁸ Arms Control Association. "UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea," April 2018.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/UN-Security-Council-Resolutions-on-North-Korea>. (Accessed December 15, 2020.)

⁹ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 1. Contradictions." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

¹⁰ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 1. Contradictions." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

¹¹ Wertz, Daniel, JJ Oh, and Kim Insung. "DPRK Diplomatic Relations." *The National Committee On North Korea*, August 2016,

https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/publications/NCNK_Issue_Brief_DPRK_Diplomatic_Relations.pdf. (Accessed December 15, 2020.)

¹²Wertz, Daniel, JJ Oh, and Kim Insung. "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

These Member States handle diplomatic relations with the DPRK through embassies in the People's Republic of China (PRC).¹³ The two most important and historical DPRK allies are the PRC and Russia.¹⁴ Currently, the PRC is the DPRK's closest ally.¹⁵ The relationship between the PRC and the DPRK stems from the alliance between the two Member States in the 1950 UN peace enforcement mission in Korea.¹⁶ Chinese leaders have enacted numerous policies since the end of the Korean war to bolster the DPRK's Kim regime.¹⁷ These policies often included trade agreements, food aid, and energy assistance.¹⁸ The cornerstone of the PRC-DPRK alliance is the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assurance.¹⁹ The treaty provided a security guarantee for the two Member States, through which either party would provide military assistance if the other was attacked, neither would enter into a relationship that could be detrimental to the other party, and both would consult together on areas of mutual interest.²⁰ It also provided the basis for PRC support to the DPRK in the UN in the face of nuclear weapons threats and human rights violations.²¹ This treaty is up for renewal in 2021.²²

The Russian Federation has also been considered a close ally of the DPRK.²³ The relationship began under the Soviet Union as the Member State supported the DPRK during the UN peace enforcement mission in Korea. After the armistice, the Soviet Union provided food aid and economic assistance to counter the PRC's influence.²⁴ The DPRK became a crucial component to the spread of Soviet influence in East Asia.²⁵ As such, similar to the PRC, the Soviets entered into a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assurance with the DPRK in 1961.²⁶ However, relations with the DPRK strained as the Soviet Union started extending economic relations to the ROK.²⁷ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia did not renew the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assurance and withdrew the economic subsidies provided to the DPRK, thus commencing the renegotiation of DPRK's outstanding debt.^{28,29} As the DPRK established itself as a nuclear power, Russia and the DPRK designed new bilateral agreements to protect their shared border.³⁰ The DPRK's nuclear proliferation remains one of Russia's largest concerns as it increases tensions in Northeast Asia and the Russo-Korean border.³¹ Despite the Member State's strong opposition to the DPRK's nuclear program, because of economic considerations regarding the

¹³Wertz, Daniel, JJ Oh, and Kim Insung. "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

¹⁴ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 3rd ed., 315–85. HarperCollins, 2018.

¹⁵ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 3rd ed., 315–85. HarperCollins, 2018.

¹⁶ Lee, Sun-Woo, and Hyungjin Cho. "A Subtle Difference between Russia and China's Stances toward the Korean Peninsula and Its Strategic Implications for South Korea on JSTOR." *Journal of International and Area Studies* 25, no. 1 (June 2018): 113–30.

¹⁷ Albert, Eleanor. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship." Council on Foreign Relations, June 25, 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/background/china-north-korea-relationship>. (Accessed December 15, 2020.)

¹⁸ Albert, Eleanor. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship."

¹⁹ Fretwell, James. "Friends Forever? The China-North Korea Defense Treaty Turns 59." North Korea News, July 11, 2020. <https://www.nknews.org/2020/07/friends-forever-the-china-dprk-defense-treaty-turns-59/>. (Accessed December 15, 2020.)

²⁰ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²¹ Albert, Eleanor. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship."

²² Albert, Eleanor. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship."

²³ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²⁴ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²⁵ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²⁶ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²⁷ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²⁸ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

²⁹ Snyder, Scott A. "Where Does the Russia-North Korea Relationship Stand?" Council on Foreign Relations, April 29, 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/where-does-russia-north-korea-relationship-stand>. (Accessed December 15, 2020.)

³⁰ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 3rd ed., 315–85. HarperCollins, 2018.

³¹ Lee, Sun-Woo, and Hyungjin Cho. "A Subtle Difference between Russia and China's Stances toward the Korean Peninsula and Its Strategic Implications for South Korea." *Journal of International and Area Studies* 25, no. 1 (June 2018): 113–30.

DPRK's status as a coal and petroleum trading partner, Russia has not strongly enforced UN sanctions and continues its foreign policy engagements with the DPRK.³²

Effects of the DPRK on the International Community

According to the UN's *DPRK Needs and Priorities Plan 2020*, 10.1 million DPRK citizens are food insecure and in need of food assistance.³³ Some DPRK citizens are willing to flee the state for a secure food source, a high-level crime punishable by death in some instances.³⁴ Of the thousands of DPRK defectors since the 1990s, over 55 percent of refugees cited food insecurity as their main reason for fleeing the Member State.³⁵ The DPRK has been able to leverage the State's need for food and energy aid with the international community's desires for non-proliferation.³⁶ Several Member States have attempted bilateral and multilateral negotiations with the DPRK, exchanging food and energy assistance for a promise of denuclearization.³⁷ The 2002-2005 Six Party Talks was a multinational negotiation between the PRC, Japan, Russia, the United States of America, the ROK, and the DPRK to assure the verifiable denuclearization of the DPRK.³⁸ In exchange, the DPRK demanded alternative energy technologies and food assistance.³⁹ The 2005 Six Party Joint Statement laid out these agreements based on the principles of the UN Charter, calling on all parties to make good on their agreements for humanitarianism for the DPRK citizens.⁴⁰ The DPRK, however, claimed the other parties were not fulfilling their commitments and resumed its nuclear program.⁴¹

It has been argued that the DPRK's prioritization of nuclear capabilities over humanitarian aid shows a failure to protect citizens under the UN's Responsibility to Protect principle.⁴² Yet many Member States believe the collapse of the DPRK's current leadership also poses a security threat to the international community.⁴³ The citizens of the DPRK are impoverished and isolated from the world, but are confined to the borders of the DPRK.⁴⁴ Neighbors such as the PRC and Russia have supported the DPRK's efforts to protect their own Member States from an influx of Korean refugees and have suggested that their infrastructure cannot handle a potential influx of reclusive and impoverished refugees.⁴⁵ ⁴⁶ The collapse of the Kim regime with no stable replacement could create an unprecedented problem: an unstable state with nuclear capabilities.⁴⁷ The DPRK is not socialized into the

³² Lee, Sun-Woo, and Hyungjin Cho. "A Subtle Difference between Russia and China's Stances toward the Korean Peninsula and Its Strategic Implications for South Korea."; Snyder, Scott A. "Where Does the Russia-North Korea Relationship Stand?"

³³ United Nations in DPR Korea. "DPR Korea Needs and Priorities Plan 2020," May 8, 2020. <https://dprkorea.un.org/en/44951-dpr-korea-needs-and-priorities-plan-2020>. (Accessed December 16, 2020)

³⁴ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 5. The Worst Place on Earth." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 3rd ed., 162–211. HarperCollins, 2018.

³⁵ Park, Kyung-Ae. "People's Exit in North Korea: New Threat to Regime Stability?" *Political Institutions: Non-Democratic Regimes EJournal*, July 26, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1976-5118.2010.01046.x>.

³⁶ Bell, Markus, and Geogrey Fattig. "Socializing a Nuclear North Korea: Human Security in Northeast Asia."

³⁷ Bell, Markus, and Geogrey Fattig. "Socializing a Nuclear North Korea: Human Security in Northeast Asia."

³⁸ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 7. Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID)." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

³⁹ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 7. Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID)." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁴⁰ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 7. Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID)." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁴¹ Inventory of International Nonproliferation Organizations and Regimes. "Six Party Talks." Center for Nonproliferation Studies, updated April 8, 2011. <https://media.nti.org/pdfs/6ptalks.pdf>. (Accessed December 17, 2020.)

⁴² United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (A/HRC/25/63.) February 7, 2014. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/108/66/PDF/G1410866.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴³ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 10. The End is Near." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 3rd ed., 427–463. HarperCollins, 2018.

⁴⁴ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 10. The End is Near." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁴⁵ Bell, Markus, and Geogrey Fattig. "Socializing a Nuclear North Korea: Human Security in Northeast Asia." *North Korean Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 30–48.

⁴⁶ Bell, Markus, and Geogrey Fattig. "Socializing a Nuclear North Korea: Human Security in Northeast Asia." *North Korean Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 30–48.

⁴⁷ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 10. The End is Near." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

international community to withstand a regime change.⁴⁸ The DPRK presents a challenge to the international community, both with and without the current Kim regime.⁴⁹

Recent Developments

Currently, the PRC and Russia continue to provide assistance to the DPRK.⁵⁰ The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assurance allows China to attempt to prevent a humanitarian disaster on the PRC-DPRK border.⁵¹ However, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed cross-border trade between the PRC and the DPRK.⁵² The PRC-DPRK border remains closed as natural disasters and a global pandemic devastate the DPRK's economy.⁵³ Further, food prices are spiking in the DPRK, leading to food insecurity among DPRK citizens who rely on Chinese agriculture trading for food.⁵⁴

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified Chinese malcontent towards North Korean refugees and increased the fear of a potential refugee influx into the PRC.⁵⁵ Similarly, Russian trade with the DPRK has also fallen since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with Russia only exporting medical supplies to the DPRK in November 2020.⁵⁶ While the Russian Foreign Ministry sees no tensions with the DPRK in the immediate future, the Russian government is being careful to avoid issues involving the DPRK to preserve domestic security on the Russian-DPRK border.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Bell, Markus, and Geogfrey Fattig. "Socializing a Nuclear North Korea: Human Security in Northeast Asia."

⁴⁹ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 10. The End is Near." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁵⁰ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 10. The End is Near." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁵¹ Cha, Victor. "Chapter 8. Neighbors." In *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*.

⁵² Kuhn, Anthony. "In Rare Display Of Contrition, North Korean Leader Admits Failures." NPR.org, January 6, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/06/953858861/in-rare-display-of-contrition-north-korean-leader-admits-failures>. (Accessed January 24, 2021.)

⁵³ Kuhn, Anthony. "In Rare Display Of Contrition, North Korean Leader Admits Failures."

⁵⁴ Kuhn, Anthony. "In Rare Display Of Contrition, North Korean Leader Admits Failures."

⁵⁵ Radio Free Asia. "Interview: 'North Korean Refugees in China Are Not Protected by Anyone,' Says Refugee-Turned-Lawmaker in South." November 11, 2020. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/ji-11112020165111.html>. (Accessed January 24, 2021.)

⁵⁶ NK PRO. "Pacemakers and Prosthetics: Russia Exports Only Medical Ware to DPRK in November," January 14, 2021. <https://www.nknews.org/pro/pacemakers-and-prosthetics-russia-exports-only-medical-ware-to-dprk-in-november/>. (Accessed January 24, 2021.)

⁵⁷ TASS. "Russia Sees No Moves from North Korea Now That Could Fuel Tensions in the Region - Lavrov," January 18, 2021. <https://tass.com/politics/1246261>. (Accessed January 24, 2021.)