



COMMUN IX  
PRESENT-DAY CRISIS COMMITTEE

KOREAN PENINSULA CRISIS

*Background Guide*

Authored by Sarin '25 and Aditya '26  
Edited by Sarah '25

## INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to COMMUN IX's Korean Peninsula Crisis Committee. We, Sarin Chaimattayompol and Aditya Anand, will be your heads and would like to thank you for choosing to participate in the global crisis that's about to unfold. For the sake of clarity, throughout this crisis we will refer to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and North Korea, and the Republic of Korea as South Korea. On our part, we will be arbitrating the discussion and working behind the scenes to execute the events and catastrophes you all will be responding to (or possibly creating). We fully believe in Model UN as a way to help students better understand, and one day to tackle the problems across the world and within our communities, and we hope to make this crisis committee an exciting and engaging one for you all. To best facilitate a knowledgeable and interesting discussion, **position papers will be required** to win an award on this committee.

Our committee is a crisis committee, meaning delegates will have to respond to events in real-time, voting on the best course of action for their party. Unlike in a general assembly, in a crisis committee your actions will directly influence the problem, causing it to improve or worsen until the day's end when a resolution will hopefully have been reached.

We hope you're as excited about this committee as we are. If you have any questions about the topic or your background guides, feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

**Sarin Chaimattayompol**  
Crisis Head, Korean Peninsula Crisis  
schaimattayompol@commschool.org

**Aditya Anand**  
Crisis Head, Korean Peninsula Crisis  
aanand@commschool.org

## INTRODUCTION

This committee has assembled in response to a North Korean nuclear accident and the release of radioactive contaminants into the surrounding environment – the Korean Peninsula. Japan and China, alarmed by the effects of wastewaters, now demand the immediate disposal of the nuclear-infested waters. Distressed fishers in these countries fear they may be out of commission with the declining demand for fish. Consumers are increasingly concerned about contaminated fish, leading countries like China to consider banning fish from polluted regions. Alongside the fishing industry's downfall, plant workers are suffering from cancer, radiation burns, and physical injuries. Across the Atlantic, the U.S and Canada stand united in voicing robust criticisms against the recent nuclear test. From diplomatic channels to public statements, both nations underscore the grave implications of such actions, highlighting concerns about

regional stability, environmental impact, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. As a delegate in this committee, your focus should be on relief, rehabilitation, and emergency assistance, especially in conflict-affected areas where the risk is higher. This means prioritizing immediate aid delivery such as food, water, shelter, and medical supplies to alleviate suffering. Additionally, rehabilitation efforts should aim to rebuild infrastructure, restore livelihoods, and provide support to affected communities. Emergency assistance remains crucial to addressing vulnerable populations. By concentrating on these areas, you as a delegate can contribute significantly to alleviating the impact of conflict and promoting stability and resilience in the affected regions.

## HISTORY



**Figure 1:** The 38th parallel dividing North and South Korea.

Source: ResearchGate

For most of its history, the Korean Peninsula has been molded by outside powers, particularly by Japanese and Chinese Dynasties that often attempted to subjugate it. Korea's modern story is no different. In ending the First Sino-Japanese War with the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, an already ailing China was forced to give up its de facto political control over Korea, creating the Korean Empire. Emperor Gojong, the penultimate Korean monarch, and his Imperial Regime hoped to remove outside influence. At the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, when Korea officially became part of the Japanese Empire.

Under Japanese occupation the Japanese sought to remove all traces of Korean culture, including folk-religions, currency, Korean government, and eventually the language itself. Korean persecution, and the rapid expansion and strengthening of the Japanese Empire into nearby territories continued until World War II's conclusion.

Along the 38th parallel, a line of latitude slicing through the Korean Peninsula, the United States and the Soviet Union made a division of Korea following the end of World War II. This division effectively split the country into two distinct ideological spheres. In the northern region, under the influence of the USSR, Kim Il Sung emerged as the formidable leader, establishing a rigid and oppressive communist regime that wielded absolute control over its populace. His leadership marked the beginning of a dictatorship characterized by strict ideological conformity and pervasive state surveillance. On the southern side, under the patronage of the United States, Syngman Rhee rose to power, albeit amidst considerable political turmoil. Rhee's leadership in South Korea was marred by authoritarian tendencies and a suppression of political dissent, reflecting an environment not markedly different from its northern counterpart. Despite differing ideological frameworks, both regimes shared a common aspiration for reunification, although under their respective ideological banners. The desire for

reunification, although championed by both governments, remained a contentious and elusive goal, overshadowed by the ideological chasm that cleaved the Korean Peninsula in two.

### The Korean War

The years following the division were marked by sporadic border skirmishes and political tensions between the two Koreas. The Northern-backed insurgency in the South, fueled by communist sympathizers and guerrilla fighters, aimed to destabilize the South Korean government and pave the way for reunification under communist rule. As diplomatic efforts to reunify the peninsula faltered, Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, authorized Kim Il Sung to pursue military action to achieve reunification, with the assurance that Mao Zedong's China would intervene if necessary to support North Korea. On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel, launching a full-scale invasion of South Korea. This marked the beginning of the Korean War, a conflict that would engulf the peninsula and go on to involve major world powers.

The global community felt the ripples of the invasion instantly. Emboldened by this show of tenacity, the PRC and the USSR began a boycott of the UN over its recognition of Taiwan as the official state of China. Subsequently, the US and UN swiftly planned an operation through the United Nations Command to repel Communist forces. Constructed of 21 countries, the force would only need a couple months to deploy.

However, as the North blitzed Southern forces past their capital of Seoul to the Pusan Perimeter, it became that the Western preparation would not happen sufficiently fast enough to save the ailing South. A risky amphibious counteroffensive led by American General Douglas MacArthur in September allowed troops to enter the town of Incheon over 100 miles beyond enemy lines. Ensuing Western victories pushed the Communists to what seemed like certain defeat.

On October 13th, a pivotal moment unfolded as 200,000 Chinese troops made a strategic move by crossing the Yalu River into the Korean peninsula. This action was rooted in China's prior agreement to intervene in the conflict, motivated partly by its desire to secure additional support from the Soviets. The consequence of this development was the shifting of the border once again to the 38th parallel, marking a critical point in the Korean War. The ensuing period saw a stalemate characterized by intense military engagements and heavy bombings inflicted upon both North Korea and South Korea. These bombings ravaged Communist infrastructure and inflicted considerable damage on military forces on both sides of the conflict. As this conflict dragged on, efforts to negotiate a resolution began to take shape. In July of 1951, armistice talks commenced, signaling a potential path towards peace. However, the negotiation process proved to be protracted, spanning two years before a ceasefire was finally declared. The establishment of the ceasefire solidified the border in its existing state, a demarcation that persists to the present day. Moreover, amidst the aftermath of the war, both North Korea and

South Korea agreed to establish the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), an area renowned as the most heavily fortified and militarized no-man's-land across the globe.

### The North Korean Famine

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, North Korea had lost its major trading partner and provider. Up until 1991, the Soviet Union had supported North Korea through agricultural assistance and other subsidies: from 1990 to 1991, Soviet exports dropped from US\$1.97 billion to US\$0.58 billion. Under ordinary conditions, however, North Korea still struggled to domestically produce enough food for itself due to its unfavorable soil. As a result, North Korea relied on China as their major trading partner, but they did not provide nearly as much assistance as the Soviets causing an immediate impact on food supplies. Additionally, food scarcity became exacerbated during the summer of 1995 where a series of floods damaged over 400,000 hectares of arable land for food production. A year later, floods had damaged southern provinces that produced 60 percent of the country's food grain, rice. In an estimation by U.S. congressional staffers, from 1995 to 1998, approximately 900,000 to 2.4 million people died from starvation or hunger-related illnesses.

Today, North Korea still faces chronic food insecurity. COVID-19 served as a contributing factor, deepening its food insecurity by closing its borders to trade movement. By tightening border controls and resting market activities, North Korea remains short about 1 million tons of grain each year. Although the country has imported large quantities of rice and flour from China, they still refuse Western help to continue the policy of "self-reliance."

### Nuclear Program in the North

On October 8, 2006, Kim Jong Il's government successfully tested their first nuclear weapon, causing a tremor of 4.2 magnitude across the Korean Peninsula. This test occurred two days after the United Nations Security Council had warned of severe and immediate consequences. Despite their efforts, three years later North Korea defiantly launched a rocket over the Pacific Ocean to demonstrate their progress towards long-range missiles. Since then, North Korea's latest efforts have been focused on long-range missiles that could reach the mainland United States, particularly intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that would allow North Korea to wield nuclear firepower against an opposing country across the world.

On July 4 2017, Pyongyang's missile programme threatened the U.S. by boasting their first successful test of Hwasong-14 that could hit "any part of the world." The missile had successfully landed in the waters east of the Korean peninsula, near Japan, and was seen as an accomplishment to the North. Another successful missile test flew higher, longer, and the U.S. believed it could have reached Alaska. The North Korean advancement of missiles threatened the national security of the U.S. and fueled international tensions all year long. Consequently, the

UN passed Resolution 2371 to condemn North Korea. Sanctions were placed on certain exports such as coal, iron, and seafood.

### Kim Jong Un

Kim Jong Il died on December 17, 2011 from a heart attack causing 27-year-old Kim Jong Un to assume power as the next Supreme Leader. As the new leader, Kim Jong Un pushed towards developing a stronger international nuclear and missile programme. In his first public speech, he praised the “military-first doctrine” and promised that threats against North Korea would “forever [be] over.” Under his control, he accelerated the timeline of North Korea’s nuclear program and launched more than 120 missile tests. Other than military advancements, Kim Jong Un publicly admitted that North Korea was not meeting its economic goals on numerous occasions, claiming it was due to “various external and internal challenges,” such as sanctions, natural disasters, and closing borders because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As for foreign policy, Kim Jong Un and then-U.S. President Donald Trump traded numerous insults against each other, as well as threatening nuclear annihilation. Despite everything, the two leaders had met a total of three times in-person, but ultimately fell short of international diplomacy.

## **CRISIS**

Recently within this crisis, North Korea has been hit by a major earthquake and flood in the northeast region near the Punggye-ri nuclear site. Punggye-ri has conducted a total of six underground nuclear tests and was shut off from further tests in the past years. Currently, the facilities locked inside the plant have faced permanent damage to its nuclear reactors as well as radiation leaks. Among the damaged nuclear reactors are their reactor cooling systems, causing the release of radioactivity around the plant. Radioactive levels were so high, visitors were not allowed to stay for more than a few hours. In response to this disaster, the North Korean government approved of discharging radioactive water into the East Sea and exposing marine life to radioactive materials in a relatively short period of time.

North Korea’s food shortage has been exacerbated by the loss of safe seafood, radiated in the disaster. Tensions in the area, specifically Japan and South Korea, have increased exponentially since this incident. As neighboring countries, they are concerned with the levels of radiation exposure on their marine animals as well as their economy. Other countries, such as China, Russia, and the U.S. are considering banning seafood from the Korean Peninsula and Japan for public safety.

## **ROLES**

Indonesia: Joko Widodo

With its location at the basin of the South China Sea, Indonesia's decisions will be a key part in determining a world order during South China Sea peace negotiations. The country has been slow to pick sides so far, however, though its own territorial claims are under threat by China, and Widodo is no exception. Working with both China and the US to fuel his country's rapid growth, it's doubtful if he'll pick a side here. However, his trade with North Korea has increased dramatically from previous presidents.

#### Singapore: Lee Hsien Loong

Singapore and South Korea have always historically had strong trade ties, with South Korea being the fourth largest import source to Singapore in 2014, with machines and chemical products making up most of the goods. It is also important to note Singapore's alignment with both the Western world, including the US, and larger regional powers such as China. Despite being one of the most pro-neutrality countries in the world, Singapore may be forced to choose to support one side in this conflict.

#### Malaysia: Anwar Ibrahim

Though Malaysia and North Korea once had strong relations, those quickly deteriorated following the assassination of Kim Jong-nam while in Malaysia. In the wake of cutting all ties with North Korea in 2021 over an extradition issue, Malaysia acknowledged South Korea as the exclusive legitimate government of all of Korea, making Malaysia the only Southeast Asian country to not maintain relations with North Korea. Preceding that, South Korea has consistently been one of Malaysia's largest foreign investment sources, and the two have remained strong allies. Being a highly partisan nation, Malaysia will have an important part to play.

#### India: Narendra Modi

Modi's foreign policy walks the delicate line between Eastern and Western, taking the benefits and drawbacks of both. Since the Sino-Indian War in 1962 India has viewed China as its greatest threat and thus will contain it at all costs, North Korea being an extension of that policy.

Where the line starts to blur is Russia. The bond between Russia and India finds its roots in a strong relationship with the Soviet Union. Much to the chagrin of the US and Western world India refused to comment on the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine, and has, conversely, only increased trade with Russia to fill the price gap left by Western sanctions.

Launching the world's largest democracy from an undeveloped nation to a possible global power, Modi commands an impressive population, which he can use for military and industrial purposes. And now, faced directly with the holes riddling his foreign policy, Modi must choose a side, or continue walking the narrowing path of neutrality.

#### United States: Anthony Blinken

Countering China, especially in the South China Sea, has been critical in the US' foreign policy. To do this he's strengthened ties with allies and others who oppose the PRC's expansion,

especially with Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea. The latter seems to have had the unintended consequence of angering the North which led to the crisis which the committee will now discuss. North Korea was never a large part of Biden's policies, rather a pacified North was treated as a stepping stone to countering Chinese influence, and so it's Blinken's highest priority to do both in this meeting

#### Japan: Fumio Kishida

The Kishida family was from Hiroshima, and so Fumio grew up hearing stories of the city's tragic nuclear bombing in 1945 by the United States. This conflict, he knows, could become an echo of the past. He has advocated peace through force, the expansion of the Japanese defensive military, the growth of old alliances with the US, India, and Australia, and the development of new ones with South Korea and the Philippines. China's expansion in the waters of the South China Sea, Fumio sees, must be brought to an end peacefully, or war unlike anything the world has known will surely break out.

Having served as the Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs before his inauguration in 2021, his stance on North Korea is one of peaceful persuasion. He's previously proposed meeting with Kim to settle the issue of North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens, to which Kim did not respond.

#### Taiwan: Tsai Ing-wen

Tsai is the leader of Taiwan, a state that from the nature of its inception must constantly fight an uphill battle for recognition, and possibly survival. She first worked as a lawyer before gaining a job with the National Security Council. Taking power in 2016 her harsh policies towards China and its allies, including North Korea, along with Xi's aggressive style of coercion have brought frequent Chinese military drills into Taiwanese airspace. Regardless, she's been pivotal in solidifying bonds with regional allies Japan and South Korea as well as the United States.

As Taiwan controls 60% of the world's semiconductor trade, which is essential in manufacturing everything from military equipment to phones and devices, Tsai has the power to halt exports to certain nations at risk of crashing the island's own economy.

#### South Korea's President: Yoon Suk Yeol

Born to two professors in Seoul during South Korea's dictatorship, he showed a passion for law at an early age. After graduating college Yoon and his colleagues held a mock-trial demanding the death penalty for the military dictator Chun Doo-huan, who had been installed just months earlier; for this he was forced to flee to the Gangwon Province.

Since his inauguration as President of the ROK in 2022 Yoon has improved South Korea's strained ties with Japan, expanded military capability and manufacturing, and strengthened ties to the US. He's maintained a solid and tough stance on relations with the North. Pulling out of the Comprehensive Agreement Pact, a deal aimed at cooling tensions between the



North and the South and urging his Reunification Minister Kim Yung-Ho to be more aggressive reflect his views that unification is a pipedream, or simply not necessary.

As the head of the ROK, he must coordinate both military and intelligence actions with his fellow delegates, especially along the DMZ.

#### South Korea's Minister of Reunification: Kim Yung-Ho

A conservative scholar and outspoken critic of the North's human rights abuses, President Yoon Suk-yeol appointed him to fix what he called the 'ministry of North Korea Aid.' Not much is known about his exact stances, but in 2019 Ho had written an article claiming the road to reunification could only be opened when the North's regime fell – painting a picture that he might be the most extreme anti-North figure in the ROK government,

Despite this he's told reporters: "I will do my best to resolve North Korea's nuclear issue with a principled approach and build the foundation to improve inter-Korean relations." While unification seems most unlikely in Yoon's government, and with polls suggesting many South Koreans don't see reunification as important, Ho must be responsible for managing peaceful relations between the two sides of the peninsula and. Due to his unique position he must aid the West in various intelligence operations, gathering information about the North's actions and intentions to help deliberate on the best course of action.

#### South Korea's Minister of National Defense: Shin Won-sik

Ditching inter-Korean military agreements summarizes the policies of Shin Won-sik ever since being appointed to his role by President Yoon Suk-yeol. He believes that the ROK military has been held back for generations and now seeks to launch it into the future as not just a technologically advanced and independent force, but one that can afford to sell arms to other nations and develop advanced cyber capabilities that exceed even that of world powers like the US and China. His policies have mainly been faced against North Korea and, when prompted, its allies China and Russia.

As the head of the South Korean Military Shin controls the movements of 3,600,000 troops and the management of information necessary for coordinated surveillance of the DMZ, Beyond this, he is an advocate for weapons development, so under his leadership the 5,850 tanks, 11,337 artillery systems and 7,032 missile defense systems will hopefully grow in number and capacity.

#### China: Xi Jinping

In prior years, Xi Jinping had served as the vice president of the People's Republic of China and was the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since 2013, Xi has remained the President of the People's Republic of China. His first initiative was a nationwide anti-corruption campaign that removed thousands of officials which were viewed as corrupt, as well as his political rivals. In 2016, the CCP granted him the title of "core leader," previously given to party members such as Mao Zedong.

China is known to use panda diplomacy, the practice of gifting giant pandas to other countries, to shore up alliances. The country is recognized to give more pandas to the DPRK than any other nation, however, in 2016, there have been a lack of diplomats in North Korea's zoos.

#### Russia: Vladimir Putin

After the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine began Putin's place on the world stage was shattered. Sanctions, diplomatic isolation and remilitarization of his Western opposition threaten to destroy the fabric of the Russia he's fought to hold and expand. So, to fill in the cracks of the quickly depleting Russian army he's forged and expanded allyships with China, North Korea, and India, meaning increased trade and, in the North's case, direct arms-buying to support his war. Keeping these relations cordial would be wise; dropping them may mean defeat.

Putin controls the Russian frontier, 11% of the world's landmass, and thus a great number of its resources, especially crude oil. Sanctions may not work on Western nations who've largely cut off their oil dependence, but when convincing neutral, and allied countries to take your side, cutting exports may give him the power to move the needle on important decisions.

The following sources may help in research:

#### North Korean Army Leader and Ground Force Leader: Ri Yong-gil

The Korean People's Army (KPA) is responsible for the military force of North Korea. Alongside Kim Jong-Un is General Ri. He supervises five branches: the Ground Force, the Naval Force, the Air Force, Strategic Force, and the Special Operation Force. In the eyes of North Koreans, General Ri has been presented as a "senior executive" who is a "trusted" colleague in the government. He is one of the most prominent figures in Kim Jong-un's entourage and was "truste" enough "to make him a candidate member of the Political Bureau of the Workers' Party." He consistently advocates for the country's military power and is "responsible for serious human rights violations in the DPRK" which caused the Council of the European Union to impose strict restrictions against General Ri in 2021.

#### Leader of the North Korean Navy: Ri Yong-ju

Currently, Ri Yong-ju serves as the commander of the Korean People's Navy. North Korea controls a green-water navy that is only capable of operating within the surrounding coasts of North Korea. Although North Korea remains disconnected with the technological advances of the west, they are abundantly filled with missiles and submarines that work in support of their army on land during wartime. Their submarine force serves as North Korea's main defensive line and dissuades their southern neighbor from waging war against them. Their fleets are small and specialized, geared towards the infiltration of special operation forces.

#### Head of the Missile General Bureau: Jang Chang-ha

Jang Chang-ha is at the forefront of North Korean missile development and oversees North Korea's nuclear tests. In the past, he has been awarded with the Hero of Republic after the

successful Hwasong-17 test fire and the Hero of Labor. In Russian military and spaceport facilities, he has been spotted to be with Kim Jung-Un suggesting signs of possible technical cooperations with Russia.

#### Pakistan: Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

In August 2023 Anwaar inherited the nation that originally helped North Korea develop its nuclear capabilities. His policies have thoroughly blurred the line between peace and conflict. Pakistan, while officially condemning North Korea, seems unwilling to place sanctions in fear of straining its relations to China. However he's preached peace across the continent and thus must serve as a voice of reason to the aggressive Eastern powers.

Pakistan's growth, while not rivaling India, should not be understated, and its army represents the 6th strongest in the world. Using its strengths to control tensions with India, or inflame them, may be a wise strategy in order to foment favorable terms in whatever peace agreements are reached.

#### Syria: Bashar Al-Assad

Syria is far and away the most violent country in the world. Going over the events and sides of its civil war would be a committee's worth of material in-itself, but as the conflict drags to a close Bashar Al-Assad, leader of the Islamist Dictatorship, is gaining legitimacy once again. Support from Russia and North Korea has been essential in securing his place, and if he wishes to continue his impressive gains, he must protect his allies on the world stage. His position fighting against Western-Aligned democratic and Kurdish forces mean that his country is perhaps the most affected by what happens within this committee.

#### Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly: Choe Ryong-hae

The Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) has the power to ratify or annul treaties, appoint ambassadors, and receive letters of credentials of foreign diplomatic representatives. The chairman of SPA Standing Committee acts as the head of state of North Korea and presides over the committee. The US Department of State and the Office of Foreign Assets Control have imposed sanctions on him based on human rights abuse and state-sponsored censorship.

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