

Future Joint Crisis of 2025 South Korea

Eileen Wang and Ben Zavelsky
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Dear delegates,

Welcome to the year 2025 and the South Korean Joint Crisis Cabinet! As your chairs, we have worked diligently to ensure that your experience during this conference will be dynamic and enlightening. This committee takes place in the year 2025 and works with (or against) the North Korean Joint Crisis Cabinet in order to achieve the ultimate goal: reunification. Considering all the recent events that have happened between the countries, you should be glad to know that even more interesting events have occurred since 2011.

Do your research, familiarize yourself with the timeline, and prepare yourself for non-stop action and problem solving! We look forward to seeing you use your diplomatic skills to maneuver through all the crises that you will encounter.

As your chairs, we will help guide your journey towards reunification. Thus, here is some information about us:

Eileen is a junior who began participating in Model UN as a freshman. Aside from academics and Model UN, she also enjoys swimming, planning prom and other activities as the Junior Class Secretary, and coaching swimmers for the Special Olympics. A "comprehensive" and "multi-faceted" person, Eileen also likes learning new languages and cultures, reading various works, thinking about unsolvable philosophical questions, and discovering the wonders of human cognition. Her dream is to travel the world and to interact with each and every culture.

Ben is also a junior, and has been in Model UN since freshman year as well. Ben plays varsity volleyball, as well as participates in debate. When not at school or doing homework, Ben volunteers at the local public radio station and his General Assembly delegate's office. When at home, he likes watching TV or reading magazines. Ben's passions include arguing over hot-button political or foreign policy issues and Michigan State basketball. At school, his favorite classes are Spanish, Russian, Economics, and Government. He is excited to be a chair and is ready to help delegates with anything that they may need.

Now that you know some information about your dais, back to business. Make sure that you research your positions thoroughly. Be familiar with the timeline as well as the personal biographies of your position. If you have any questions about writing position papers or need help with your research, feel free to e-mail us. Best of luck with your research and preparation! We look forward to receiving your emails and seeing you in April!

Sincerely,

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Committee Information

History

The instability that caused the separation of North and South Korea existed prior to the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950. In 1910, Japan annexed Korea and started a period of colonial rule. Japan ruled malevolently for 35 years; it attempted to eliminate all the elements of Korean culture from society and siphon all of Korea's resources to feed the imperial war machine of Japan. In 1919, at the height of the independence movement, Korea established the Provisional Government, which strove to represent the Korean people and provide them with sovereignty. This government persisted into the period of World War II, assisting the allies in the Pacific and celebrating the Japanese surrender in November 1945.

After being freed from Japanese rule, Koreans were suddenly faced with the difficulty of overcoming colonial conditions that had accumulated during the four decades of Japanese domination. Liberation had not brought the independence for which they had fought. Instead, liberation resulted in ideological conflicts that partitioned the country.

The efforts of Koreans to establish an independent government were further frustrated by American and Soviet occupation; for both the US and the Soviet Union, Korea was another stage of battle in the Cold War. In 1945, the administration under US President Harry Truman decided to occupy Korea in the face of the growing communist influence in Europe and the communists' victory in China. By supporting South Korea, the US thought it would be able to fight communism without directly attacking Russia. Mindful of the prevailing Domino Theory, the US also thought that if Korea fell to communism, Japan, an important American trade partner, would become the next "domino." The Soviet Union also

invested in Korea because Joseph Stalin wanted to see the expansion of communism in Asia. These transplantations of conflicting political ideologies south and north of the 38th parallel further intensified a growing national split, and the Korean people were left far from their hopes of a united, independent government.

First Republic and Korean War

Under the supervision of the US, the government of the Republic of Korea (ROK), encompassing the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, was established on August 15, 1948, with Syngman Rhee as its President. Unable to eliminate the vestiges of colonial rule, the new government of Korea faced the pressing task of reconstructing the bankrupt economy left by the Japanese and the three-year post-liberation chaos. In addition, the ideological confrontation with North Korea, which was established as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), inevitably gave rise to a tense military confrontation. In 1948, the US Military Government handed over its administrative authority to the ROK Government after crafting a provisional military pact and establishing the Economic Cooperation Administration. The US soon withdrew its occupation forces from Korea, leaving only a small group of military advisers. The Soviet Union had already done the same in DPRK. The Soviet Union made agreements with North Korea, providing it with military, economic, and technological assistance. China was also quick to establish diplomatic relations with the new North Korea.

In 1949, DPRK leader Kim Il-sung persuaded both Stalin and Mao Zedong, the communist leader of China, to support him in his bid to conquer South Korea and unite the divided peninsula. On the morning of June 25, 1950, North Korean troops began a well-prepared, all-out offensive against the South

across the 38th parallel without any warning or declaration of war. South Korea appealed to the United Nations, and in response, the Security Council passed a resolution ordering the communists to withdraw to the 38th parallel and calling on all member countries to give military support to the ROK. North Korea quickly gained control of the ROK's capital, Seoul; the heavily armed communists and their Russian-produced T-34 tanks pushed forward until they reached the Nakdong-gang River near Daegu. Five days after the invasion, President Truman enforced the UN mandate and committed US troops to defending the ROK against the communist-allied DPRK. Under the command of US General Douglas MacArthur, the UN forces began to take the initiative, and after a surprise landing at Incheon, they pushed the communists out of South Korea and advanced into the North.

In October, the Chinese came to the aid of the DPRK, forcing UN forces to retreat. On March 12, the UN forces regrouped and mounted a counterattack that retook Seoul for the South. A stalemate was reached along the 38th parallel in the area where the conflict had originally begun, and, at this point, the Soviet Union called for truce negotiations. These negotiations finally began at Gaesung in July 1951, persisting for two years. After suffering great casualties, an armistice agreement was reached on July 27, 1953.

After the Korean War, South Korea went through a series of autocratic governments and constitutions, all of which sparked anti-government protests and turmoil. In the First Republic, Syngman Rhee ruled autocratically with a strong anti-communist stance and limited political freedoms. In 1952, Syngman Rhee sought to cement his control of the ROK government by declaring martial law. He also passed a fraudulent constitutional amendment to exempt himself from the previously established eight-year term limit, and he was elected again in 1956. In 1958, he sought to amend the National

Security Law, which was intended “to restrict anti-state acts that endanger the national security and to protect the nation’s safety and its people’s life and freedom.” Rhee’s administration corrupted the 1960 presidential elections and won again by a landslide, sparking the outbreak of student-led protests throughout the south. In response, the government called in the army, and suppressed the students with open fire. Continued protests that month shook the government, and President Rhee was forced to hand in his formal resignation and flee to Hawaii.

Third and Fourth Republics

On May 16, 1961, Major General Park Chung-hee organized a military coup that toppled the civilian government. The administration of General Park Chung-hee proclaimed the Third Republic of Korea in December of 1963. Though the authoritarian rule of General Park was oppressive, he instigated many social and economic changes. With the Five Year Economic Development Plan as his guide, he helped South Korea to undergo a huge economic transformation through government-sponsored industrialization. Consequently, the per capita income rose to 13 times that of North Korea. Park was able to engineer major enhancements in the industrial structure, especially in the chemical industries, and in infrastructure projects, such as the Seoul-to-Pusan expressway and the Seoul subway system. The economy began to prosper.

Wanting to hold authoritarian power without any check, in December 1972, President Park ordered the parliamentary system to be abolished, and the Yushin system was established. Through the Yushin constitution, President Park was able to remain in office for an indefinite period of time, and he directly controlled the legislature, judiciary, and even school curricula.

The people of South Korea started to criticize the harshly repressive measures and injustices of the government perpetuated in

the wake of Park's aggressive policies of economic growth. Thus, students and activists for democracy continued their demonstrations and protests, this time for the abolition of the Yushin system. In the face of the continuing popular unrest, President Park's administration enacted new emergency decrees in 1974 and 1975, jailing hundreds of dissidents. In the midst of this political turmoil, on October 26, 1979, President Park was assassinated by the chief of the Korean CIA, Kim Jae-kyu, thus bringing an end to the 18 year rule of military regime.

Fifth Republic

Within six days of Prime Minister Choi Kyu-hah's inauguration as President, Major General Chun Doo-hwan led his 1979 coup d'état of December twelfth. In response to continued protests, General Chun Doo-hwan declared martial law on May 17, 1980. However, the protests against the legitimacy of the government and the push for constitutional change and direct election of a president only escalated.

In September of that year, the Fifth Republic officially began when Chun, promising to build a "Great Korea" in a new era, was elected president by an indirect election. All political activities resumed in January of 1981 as martial law was lifted. The new constitution contained notable changes; it maintained the presidential system but limited it to a single seven year term, strengthened the authority of the National Assembly, and conferred the responsibilities of judicial appointments on the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Still, the system of indirect presidential election remained, and many highly ranked government positions continued to be filled by military officers, keeping with the Yushin tradition established in the Fourth Republic. Thus, university students and labor unions continued to lead strong protests against it.

Finally, on June 29, 1987, the government's presidential nominee Roh Tae-woo yielded to the demands of the people and

announced the Declaration of Political Reforms which called for direct presidential elections and restoration of civil rights. In October 1987, a revised constitution was approved by national referendum, and direct elections for a new president were carried out in December, bringing the Fifth Republic to a close.

Sixth Republic and Democracy

Because Roh Tae-woo acceded to all of the opposition's demands, thereby defusing the political crisis and providing for the first direct election of the president in 16 years, the Sixth Republic thus began on a positive note, with the most serious political issues already resolved. President Roh Tae-woo began his term of office promising that authoritarian rule would end and that the June Democracy Declaration would continue to be faithfully implemented. The historic government interference in the freedom of press and labor-management affairs was discontinued, those who had been detained on political charges were released and had their civil rights restored, university autonomy was recognized, and restrictions on overseas travel were lifted. Shortly after his inauguration, the Seoul Olympics took place, raising South Korea's international recognition and greatly influencing foreign policy.

In December 2002, Roh Moo-hyun was elected to presidency under the motto of "participation government." The Roh administration succeeded in overcoming regionalism in South Korean politics, diluting the collusive ties between politics and business, empowering civil society, settling the Korea-United States FTA (Free Trade Area) issue, and continuing summit talks with North Korea. However, Roh's popularity dropped by the end of his term because of the unrest from laborers and the discontinued plans for reform, among other domestic and international issues.

Lee Myung-bak was inaugurated in February 2008 with "creative pragmatism" as his guiding principle. His administration set

out to revitalize the flagging economy, reenergize diplomatic ties, stabilize social welfare, and meet the challenges of globalization. However, many issues plagued the government in the beginning of the administration, such as controversies regarding the appointment of high-ranking government officials, rampant political conflicts, accusations of oppression of the media and strained diplomatic relationships with North Korea and Japan. South Korea underwent a recession, their worst economic crisis since 1997. After regulatory and economic reforms, the economy bounced back and recovered from the global recession.

South Korean Military

The past several decades of rapid economic growth have corresponded with a shift in the role of the ROK military. South Korea has one of the highest defense budgets in the world. Its capabilities include many sophisticated American and European weapon systems, complemented by an advanced and growing indigenous defense manufacturing sector. South Korea also has a joint military partnership with the US, as outlined by the Mutual Defense Treaty signed after the Korean War; thus, two percent of the Korean military is made up of US deployment.

Since the division of the Korean peninsula, North Korean agents have infiltrated across the border numerous times, although the North Korean government has never accepted direct responsibility for any of these incidents. Most North Korean infiltrations have resulted in casualties among troops on both sides. In November 1974, North Koreans began to infiltrate through tunnels under the demilitarized zone (DMZ). There have also been a number of maritime and air incidents.

Challenges to Reunification

After the armistice agreement in July 1953, the ROK remained so focused on maintaining internal stability and economic

growth that true attempts at peaceful talks with North Korea were not made until 1980. At that time, North Korea submitted a “one nation, two system” reunification proposal, which was met with a suggestion from the South to meet and prepare a unification constitution and government through referendum. The humanitarian issue of reuniting families was addressed first, and in September 1985, families from both sides of the 38th parallel made visits to Seoul and Pyongyang in a landmark event.

Shortly after President Roh’s inauguration, as the Seoul Olympics took place, the ROK government announced the official unification plan, Nordpolitik, which established diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, China, and countries in Eastern Europe. In 1991, the two Koreas simultaneously became members of the UN.

After President Kim Young-sam’s unsuccessful attempts to better the relations with North Korea, President Kim Dae-jung pursued the “Sunshine Policy.” This was a series of efforts to reconcile with North Korea, and it culminated in the reunion of families separated by the Korean War and a summit talk with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. For these efforts, President Kim Dae-jung was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000, and today, he remains the only Nobel laureate from South Korea. However, the lack of true North Korean cooperation and a major shift in post-September 11th American foreign policy seriously challenged the efficacy of the Sunshine Policy. Later presidents like Roh Moo-hyun continued the summit talks with North Korea. Other attempts at unifying the Korean national identity occurred during the 2000 and 2004 Summer Olympics when a unified Korean team marched in the opening ceremonies.

Opponents of the Sunshine Policy argue that the dialogue and trade with North Korea has done nothing to improve prospects for peaceful reunification and that South Korea has seen little benefit from engagement with North Korea, despite President Kim

Dae-jung's transfer of large funds to the North Korean government. Many also believe that South Korea should remain prepared in the event of an attack by North Korea. Supporters of the policy argue that the help given to North Korea only reinforces the isolated regime of Kim Jong-il. They believe that leaving North Korea alone would be better, as this would eventually bring the collapse of North Korea, and allow the country to be reunified under the ROK.

Economic differences between North and South Korea are also a cause of concern. The income per capita ratio between South and North Korea is fifteen to one, and this gap is rapidly increasing as the North Korean economy stagnates while the South Korean economy grows.

Finally, the most obvious cause for concern is the clash of politics and ideology and possible discrimination. Nevertheless, while the attitude of the South Korean government towards North Korea has changed dramatically in the last few decades, the attitude of the North Korean government towards South Korea remains obstinately negative.

Conclusion

The division between North and South Korea is rooted in the unstable state left behind by Japanese colonial rule. In the few months after the Japanese surrendered to Korea, the US and the Soviet Union planted their respective ideologies of democracy and communism, further dividing the country until the Korean War broke out. The Korean

War ended in an armistice agreement but has not yet been resolved in any meaningful way. South Korea struggled to regain political stability after the war, and it underwent oppressive autocratic leaders and five different republics and constitutions until the Sixth Republic established a democracy in 1987. Even with this political strife, the South Korean economy has prospered and is recognized internationally. Meanwhile, the tensions between the two Koreas have been escalating. Thus, reunification remains a debated topic because of stark cultural, economic, and ideological differences between North and South Korea.

Questions to Consider

- Would the involvement of foreign countries (e.g. the US, Russia, and China) help or hinder the reunification process?
- With the starkly contrasting political ideologies, how can North and South Korea undergo the reunification process as seamlessly as possible?
- Should democracy be introduced to North Korea?
- Under what political structure should the reunification process occur?
- Should humanitarian and food aid still be provided to North Korea?
- What are strategies to prevent a possible economic collapse after the reunification?
- How can the level of North Korean refugees after the reunification be regulated?
- Why have previous agreements between North and South Korea failed?

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