

Future Portrait of Korea: Political Timeline



GSMUN 2011

February 2012: In a nationally televised address, South Korean president Lee Myung-bak announces his intention to place the maritime border under a naval blockade. Citing recent incidents and North Korean failure to make amends for the 2010 sinking of the Cheonan, Lee authorizes ROK forces to fire upon any vessels attempting to illegally to cross the designated boundary. Liberal lawmakers within the National Assembly are quick to criticize Lee for warmongering and using a dangerous situation to distract from increasing domestic dissatisfaction with the ruling Grand National Party.

April 2012: In a widely publicized set of maneuvers, the North Korean navy carries out several exercises in defensive surface warfare. Of particular concern is the test of Chinese manufactured Silkworm anti-ship missiles. US naval units in the region refuse to confirm detection of numerous submarine exercises as well.

June 2012: Officials from the South Korean Ministry of Labor announce a temporary freeze on new participation with the Kaesong Industrial Region, which will levy a fine on any southern company which opens additional facilities in the region. Modeled on the special economic zones within China, Kaesong is a zone on the northern side of the DMZ, which allows southern companies to build factories and employ northerners. The announcement comes as a major blow, as the region was popular with South Korean businesses and a promising sign for the northern economy.

August 2012: In what appears to be a sudden crackdown, special teams from the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency launch several simultaneous raids throughout the capital that result in the arrest of almost 20 South Koreans deemed to be in violation of the National Security Law. While several are charged with espionage for the north, the accused represent prominent leftist

opposition to the Lee presidency, sparking questions of the political use of the national police force.

September 2012: While not released the western press, elements within the CIA and DIA receive a report prepared by the South Korean National Intelligence Service which describes the events preparing for the succession of Kim Jong-Il. The report cites the growing influence Jang Song Taek, Kim's brother in law and a crucial member of the National Defense Commission. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) report speculates that Jang will be a senior overseer in the transition of power to Kim Jong-Un, the youngest of Kim's sons.

April 2013: Northern officials announce an invitation to southern diplomats and businessmen to a joint commission on economic unification. The purpose of the commission would be to explore greater southern investment in northern infrastructure and manufacturing, as well the renewal of transportation routes between the two nations. In an attempt to show regional cooperation, the north also announces Chinese participation in the commission and invites Japan or other regional powers to participate. This move is the greatest showing of pragmatism since the death of Kim Il-Sung. The commission is to be headed by Jang Song Taek, indicating his growing influence among moderates and reformers within the northern regime.

October 2013: Citing violations of the National Security Law, the South Korean government shuts down a major television broadcaster. In the joint order issued by the ministries of justice and national defense, the station is said to have revealed information about the exact location of ROK military maneuvers near the DMZ, compromising their tactical security. In an interview, the chairman of the company announces that no such security breach occurred and that the

government actions were retaliation for a report alleging that President Lee had illegally steered military contracts to Hyundai Heavy Industries Group. Prior to his election as mayor of Seoul, Lee was a major executive within the construction branch of the Hyundai group.

February 2015: In meetings with high level South Korean diplomats, former President and informal envoy Bill Clinton pushes for a resumption of negotiations with the north, placing an emphasis on exchanging economic cooperation for guarantees of disarmament. Despite reports of heated argument between the former American president and President Lee, the summit produces a joint statement which announces that the ROK is willing to prepare a significant economic aid package if IAEA inspectors are allowed to resume inspections of the Yongbyon facilities and the north is willing to reduce its conventional arms by 15 percent over the next five years.

March 2015: Citing the rapid progress being made in disarmament negotiations, President Lee receives approval from the national legislature to postpone the scheduled presidential election until the end of the year, in order to preserve “continuity of diplomatic perspective.”

May 2015: In his first major appearance in several years, an obviously ailing Kim Jong-Il presides over the announcement allowing IAEA inspectors to return to a designated list of inspection sites involving the nuclear plant at Yongbyon. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is quick to praise the act as a step on the road to the resumption of six-party talks. Congressional Republicans criticize the ongoing negotiations as validating northern attempts to blackmail the West with its nuclear program.

June 2015: In their first report, IAEA inspectors at Yongbyon announce that samples and records from the last 10 years

suggest that Pyongyang has enriched enough uranium for several tactical weapons. However, the investigation also claims that serious economic and logistical woes have challenged the program, speculating that most of the weapons grade material was produced prior to 2010. IAEA personnel also note the continuing unwillingness of northern authorities in expanding the list of sites authorized for inspection.

January 2016: Conducting routine exercises with the South Korean navy over the Yellow Sea, a US Navy SH-60 Seahawk helicopter is hit with an anti-aircraft missile fired from the North Korean coast. The missile later was identified to be a Russian-made shoulder-fired projectile, directly impacts the helicopter, killing two of the crew and causing the pilot to ditch the aircraft in the water beyond the North Korean boundary. Also, following an official condemnation of the attack, the ROK military and US forces of the 2nd Infantry Division are put on high alert. President Lee announces the closing of all border crossings, including sealing any southerners from entering the industrial zone at Kaesong. Inside reports suggest that President Obama was not consulted before the southern reaction.

October 2016: Conferring in Moscow, the US agrees to renew shipments of fuel oil halted in the early 2000s as a guarantee of the pilots’ release. The pilots are escorted onto the southern side of the DMZ on the final day of the month. While the nature of the agreement is not released to the public, Congressional Republicans are quick to accuse the Obama administration of appeasement.

November 2016: America elects a moderate Republican former businessman as president and further bolster congressional Republican majorities who promise to focus on a tough foreign policy and rebuilding the American military from its time in Iraq and Afghanistan.

December 2016: In a shocking move reminiscent of Korean politics in the Cold War period, ROK President Lee Myung-bak announces that the scheduled presidential election is to be indefinitely postponed due to national security concerns. Citing the attack on the American helicopter and ongoing inspections into the North's nuclear capabilities, Lee announces that a change in national leadership could jeopardize relations with the DPRK, allowing the north to take advantage of a weak new government.

May 2017: Appearing to continue on the track to economic pragmatism, Moscow hosts a prominent delegation of North Korean economic officials and dignitaries, marking President Vladimir Putin's reengagement in Asian affairs. Western press sources are quick to speculate about the members of the delegations; while several of Kim Jong-Il's closest advisors attend, his son and prospective heir does not.

November 2017: The IAEA offers its latest assessment of the program at Yongbyon after a year of relatively uninterrupted inspections. While the inspectors offer cautious optimism in that no new enrichment operations have been conducted for at least 2 years, there remains cause for alarm. The inspectors report that there are discrepancies between DPRK production records and the radiation levels observed in IAEA testing, suggesting that some nuclear material is unaccounted for at the known sites.

January 2018: After several unconfirmed intelligence reports from late December, North Korea officially announces to its people and the world that Kim Jong-Il is dead. The 77-year-old leader had been all but incapacitated for the past decade and had faded from public memory. Tens of thousands of North Koreans turn out for his state funeral in Pyongyang, presided over by his relatively unknown heir Kim Jong-un.

February 2018: In several unrelated and uncharacteristically violent episodes, the internal leadership struggles within the ranks of the DPRK are exposed to the world. In two separate incidents, associates of Jong Song Taek, a moderate advisor to Kim Jong-Un and opponent of the military, are killed in car bombings outside Pyongyang. During the same week, several prominent members of the National Defense Commission with strong ties to the military establishment are relieved from their positions by order of the office of the Supreme Leader. Outside experts point to these events as evidence that Kim Jong-Un has still not managed to create his own political identity within the government structure.

April 2019: In a news conference in Seoul, President Lee announces additional plans to expand the South Korean military through a massive spending package and the phased introduction of a limited form of conscription for all southern males. The announcement, by a president who has relinquished much of his image as a legitimate ruler, is met with street protests that are quickly dispersed by police and military units. In the US, ranking Republican members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee continue to avoid any action against Lee's arbitrary government.

August 2019: The KCIA notifies American military authorities that Jong Song Taek has attempted to make contact with southern officials to allow for defection. A key advisor to Kim Jong-Il in his later attempts at pragmatism, Jong claims to be dissatisfied with the growing power of the military and the internal divisions within the National Defense Commission.

September 2019: In a public statement, northern defense officials reveal the planned defection of Jong Song Taek and announce plans for a public trial for treason. This news immediately sets off large street riots in

several cities, resulting in an outpouring of conspicuous opposition not seen in decades.

January 2020: The highly publicized trial of Jong Song Taek begins in Pyongyang. However, the proceeding falls into complete chaos after sympathetic police forces allow large crowds of protestors to storm the courts building. In the scene that follows, Jong delivers a speech to the assembled masses and police about the opportunity for economic change and democratization in the DPRK.

March 2020: After several months of extreme tension following the spectacle surrounding Jong's trial, clashes between local police forces and northern DMZ border guards breaks out after an attempt to remove the army troops from a border town. In several other places around the DPRK, reports are beginning to filter out which describe inter-military clashes and sometimes pitched street battles between police, army troops, and protesting citizens. The KCIA reports that it has never been aware of such violence with the highly controlled northern society.

August 2020: In another unprecedented shift in DPRK control over its citizens, border authorities in the south announce a mass influx of northern refugees seeking asylum. In many places, the northern border guards assist in attempting to escort the fleeing civilians across the border, marking a breakdown never before seen. In addition, Chinese authorities announce similar attempts by numerous northern refugees to flee across the Chinese border.

May 2021: During a heated debate over the solution to the increasing number of northern refugees, an unidentified staff member produces a handgun and injures several members of the ROK national assembly. In response, President Lee announces the indefinite dissolution of the legislative body.

September 2021: After returning for a regularly scheduled inspection under the terms of a 2015 agreement, IAEA inspectors are detained by northern security forces. After a week of detention, they are placed on a plane bound for France. Their departure is marked by announcement by the National Defense Commission that no subsequent inspections will be permitted without risk of conflict.

March 2022: China announces that due to the increasing signs of unrest along its border, it will be implementing a strict new enforcement plan to halt the influx of refugees from the DPRK.

June 2022: At a summit in Seoul, President Lee announces a new defense pact with Russia that allow for the shipment of advanced weaponry and beginning of joint exercises. In the US, the president denounces the pact as expansion of Russian influence into East Asia.

August 2022: The Washington Post publishes a leaked copy of a National Intelligence Estimate which points to the growing inability of the northern government to control major popular unrest within the DPRK and a leadership structure split between pragmatists and the military hardliners.

November 2022: After a meeting of the UN Council for Human Rights, the UN decides to dispatch a small humanitarian aid force to help provide supplies and shelter to the ROK authorities struggling to cope with a continuing flow of refugees from a disintegrating DPRK. This event is followed by an issue of Time magazine whose cover proclaims "The End of North Korea."

February 2023: During a midday rush of refugees and UN personnel, northern artillery opens up on the southern side of the DMZ, killing several escaped northerners as well as an Italian medical team that had been attached

to the UN refugee mission. When ROK troops respond with counter battery fire, northern units begin to direct shelling onto the northern suburbs of Seoul, well within the range of DRPK barrage.

March 2023: South Korean air defense units north of Seoul report shooting down several northern reconnaissance aircraft which appear to be serving as spotters for the ongoing bouts of sporadic artillery fire.

April 2023: In an emergency meeting, the American president meets with President Lee in Tokyo. At the meeting, which is not publicized, President Lee expresses his belief that the US must implement “OPLAN 5029,” a contingency plan designed for American and ROK troops to seize nuclear and conventional weapon stockpiles in the event of the collapse of the DPRK. It is rumored that President Lee also requests a promise from the American president that, in the event of a northern nuclear strike, the ROK would be protected by American nuclear forces. ROK troops place the entire DMZ on the highest state of alert, refusing to allow any kind of travel in or out of the south. While southern troops continue a major build up along the border, artillery exchanges have become less frequent.

May 2023: Using surface to air missiles, border protection troops on the DPRK side of the DMZ shoot down a southern commercial passenger jet flying in ROK airspace, killing almost 200 people. The Chinese government is the first to denounce this act, threatening punitive action if the DPRK does not control itself. A statement from Pyongyang (it is unclear how much influence Kim Jong-Un has at this point) cites the act as retaliation for supposed ROK attempts on the life of the supreme leader.

September 2023: After several months of intense and unpublicized negotiations, a basic ceasefire is declared on the DMZ. With

Russian negotiators playing the lead role in the compromise, a plan is created under which a joint peacekeeping force of American, Russian, and Chinese troops will police a buffer zone that extends 15 miles on both sides of the existing DMZ. To pacify President Lee, the north must show a scheduled reduction in conventional arms holdings and abandon any further nuclear research. To preserve the pride of Kim Jong-Un, this plan will prevent the coalition troops from following through on the initial plan, to replace the Communist regime by force. Neither troops from the DPRK or ROK will be allowed within the buffer zones or the DMZ itself. In an unusual shift in the balance of power, this coalition is created without the consent or involvement of the UN Security Council.

January 2024: The first Russian and Chinese troops join American soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Division along the DMZ. After several weeks, coalition forces have successfully removed the last Korean forces from within the buffer zones.

April 2024: Tensions flare within the coalition after it is discovered that the American Department of Defense had knowledge of secret arms sales between the ROK and Taiwan, transactions uncovered after a Chinese naval vessel intercepted a southern flagged ship which strayed into Chinese waters after departing Taiwan.

September 2024: IAEA inspectors return to North Korea for the first time since their eviction in 2021. Under the protection of coalition forces, they begin to oversee a highly publicized disassembly of the DPRK nuclear program.

