



# Disarmament and International Security

ENMUNC V



Scale 1:46,000,000

Winkel Tripel Equal-Area Projection

400 800 Kilometers  
400 800 Nautical Miles

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.



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## Letter from the Chair

Hello Delegates!

My name is Megan Xing and I will be your Chair for ENMUNC V's DISEC committee. Currently, I am a junior at Emory University studying Creative Writing and History on the pre-law track. I'm from Queens, and although I joined Model UN in my first semester of junior year, I love the nuances and critical thinking that both Crisis and GA demand. Outside of MUN, I love reading, playing video games, and watching chess clips.

In an increasingly unstable political atmosphere, DISEC committees become increasingly relevant, particularly as the dominant countries of the world battle for hegemony. As delegates, you will find yourself grappling with questions of deterrence, disarmament, and international security. The committee's agenda will revolve around these topics in the specific region of East Asia, both in the South China Sea and on the Korean peninsula. You will need to collaborate closely to formulate targeted solutions that address the complex balance of deterrence and denuclearization, reflecting the real-world issues faced by the UN today. More importantly, you will be dealing with the intricacies of power: how it's controlled, how it's used, and what it means in a world that becomes exponentially more deadly and rests in the hands of fewer and fewer people.

I'm excited to see you all in March, and until then, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns!

Best,  
Megan



## **Sensitivity Statement**

Dear Delegates,

You are expected to retain decorum throughout the committee and treat these issues with the seriousness they call for. Even though this committee deals with geopolitical conflicts that have a history of racial conflict and discrimination, absolutely no discriminatory behavior will be permitted. Any appeal to or use of discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated. Undiplomatic behavior towards fellow delegates, including bullying, personal insults, and harassment, will also not be tolerated. ENMUNC seeks to maintain a fair and balanced environment that allows delegates to shine and showcase their talents. As such, using pre-writing or similarly deceptive tactics, such as using AI in writing working papers in our committee, will not be tolerated by the dais or ENMUNC as an organization. Plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable at ENMUNC. If issues arise with the conduct of a delegation or individual, feel free to reach out to Megan Xing at [enmuncvdisec@gmail.com](mailto:enmuncvdisec@gmail.com) or to our Under-Secretary-General, Kekeli Amekudzi, at [kekeli.amekudzi@emory.edu](mailto:kekeli.amekudzi@emory.edu).

## **Technology Policy**

Generative AI is strictly forbidden from being used to generate documents such as resolutions, trade agreements, or press releases from this committee. These documents must be your work. Technology of any form is only allowed during unmoderated forms of debate.



## Position Papers

Each delegation must submit a position paper before the conference. A position paper summarizes your delegation's understanding of the issue, outlines your nation's stance, and proposes solutions for debate. Each paper should follow a clear three-paragraph format. The first paragraph should highlight the most pressing aspects of the issue and key facts relevant to your stance. The second paragraph should explain your country's position, why the issue is important to your nation, and any unique national perspectives. The final paragraph should propose solutions and actions you believe should be included in a resolution.

Each delegation must submit one position paper per topic area. Papers should be written in third person, using Times New Roman, 12-point font, single-spaced, and approximately one page in length, with citations in Chicago, MLA, or APA format. Position papers are crucial for demonstrating preparation and are required for awards consideration. Papers must be submitted by March 14 at 11:59 PM to be eligible for position paper awards and by March 17 for any other awards. No late submissions will be accepted. Advisors or head delegates must submit papers as CountryCommitteeName.pdf/.docx to the designated email: [enmuncvdisec@gmail.com](mailto:enmuncvdisec@gmail.com).

## Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), or the First Committee, was established in 1945 with the ratification of the UN charter.<sup>1</sup> The First Committee deals with questions of disarmament, global security, and maintaining international peace. According to the UN Charter, its role is to “consider the general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council or to both.”<sup>2</sup> Bear in mind that DISEC is not the UN Security Council and doesn't have the authority to call for sanctions against a state or take military action against an aggressor. The scope of matters allocated to DISEC are considered under seven categories: nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, disarmament aspects of outer space, regional disarmament and security, conventional weapons, disarmament machinery, and other disarmament measures and international security. DISEC is the only Main Committee entitled to verbatim records, and it is a significant part of the wider “UN disarmament machinery” that was formed in 1978 by a Special Session of the General Assembly. The First Committee works closely with the UN Disarmament Commission, a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, a multilateral forum.<sup>3</sup> In addition to its role in the General Assembly, DISEC is also a part of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), which deals with broader questions of disarmament on a multilateral level. Through the work of the General Assembly and its First Committee, as well as other bodies, UNODA provides substantive and organizational norm-setting support in the area of disarmament.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un/san-francisco-conference>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

<sup>3</sup>[https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/un\\_pga\\_new\\_handbook\\_0.pdf](https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/un_pga_new_handbook_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup><https://disarmament.unoda.org/about/>

## Topic One: Strategic Ambiguity and China-Taiwan War

### *Introduction to Topic One*

For several centuries, Taiwan has retained relative autonomy despite its uncertain sovereign status. The island country was first annexed by the Qing Dynasty in 1683.<sup>5</sup> In 1895, following the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese war, Japan acquired Taiwan as a colony. Taiwan became recognized as a Chinese colony during WWII following a conference in Cairo between Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>6</sup>

When the Qing Dynasty fell in 1911, China fell into political and social turmoil. During this chaotic era, there were two main groups competing to shape the ideology and future of China: the Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After the Japanese surrendered at the end of WWII, the U.S. tried to mediate a truce between the two parties, but withdrew in 1947 following numerous disagreements and cease-fire violations. Although military aid to the KMT was suspended, the U.S. continued to support them economically. In 1949, Mao Zedong, the chairman of the CCP, established the People's Republic of China in Beijing, and Chiang Kai-Shek, generalissimo of the KMT, withdrew to Taiwan along with two million KMT troops and supporters, proclaiming Taipei the temporary capital of the Republic of China.<sup>7</sup>

In 1950, some cross-strait tensions erupted, but after the beginning of the Korean War, the U.S. dispatched a fleet to patrol the Taiwan Strait. Throughout the Cold War, the standoff ensued, but in part due to the U.S.-led anti-communist campaign and in part due to Taiwan's isolationist and ideological position, the island received substantial international recognition as the Republic of China.<sup>8</sup> In 1971, the landmark UN Resolution 2758 passed, transferring China's UN seat to the PRC. While it does not explicitly affirm that Taiwan is a part of China, the resolution is widely interpreted as an affirmation of the UN's support for Chinese sovereignty. In recent years, UN organs and staff have begun refusing to follow procedure with member-state reports that contain references to "Taiwan," citing Resolution 2758 as the basis. One instance of this relates to voluntary national reviews (VNR) on sustainable development that some of Taiwan's diplomatic partners have submitted to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The UNDESA website previously included a disclaimer that followed the UN's general public position on Taiwan stating the following: "The document and

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<sup>5</sup>[https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content\\_3.php](https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_3.php)

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content\\_3.php](https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_3.php)

<sup>7</sup><https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/archives/asia-division/background-and-over-view>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/archives/asia-division/background-and-over-view>

reports submitted by States that are available on this website have been placed on the platform as received from those States. The designations employed do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the UN concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area, or of its authorities or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.” Around 2018, UNDESA began refusing to publish VNRs that used terminology other than “Taiwan, Province of China” and dropped the disclaimer from their website.<sup>9</sup>

The U.S. has historically engaged itself with Taiwan in several different ways, the first being military and economic support to the KMT during the civil conflict and political chaos of the early 20th century. In 1954, the U.S. and the ROC signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in which the U.S. pledged support for Taiwan in the case of PRC aggression. In 1979, when the U.S. and mainland China first established relations, the Mutual Defense Treaty was repealed. U.S. troops stationed in Taiwan withdrew, and the U.S. also withdrew formal diplomatic recognition of Taiwan.<sup>10</sup> Shortly afterward, however, Congress reestablished an unofficial relationship with Taiwan and reaffirmed U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s security through the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA).<sup>11</sup>

Taiwan has not been a member of the UN charter since 1971.<sup>12</sup>

### *Problem Identification*

#### **GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS**

The South China Sea is a significant region, home to rich fishing grounds and the operating grounds of more than half the world’s fishing vessels. It is also a major shipping route, and in 2016 the UN Conference on Trade and Development estimated that over 21% of global trade transited through these waters, amounting to \$3.37 trillion.

Although there have been centuries of territorial disputes in the South China Sea, tension has grown in recent years. China’s sovereignty claims in particular have angered competing claimants, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. China claims the largest portion of territory in an area demarcated by its “nine-dash line,” a line comprising nine dashes that extend hundreds of

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<sup>9</sup>[https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/GMF\\_UNGA%20Res.%202758\\_April%202024%20Report.pdf](https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/GMF_UNGA%20Res.%202758_April%202024%20Report.pdf)

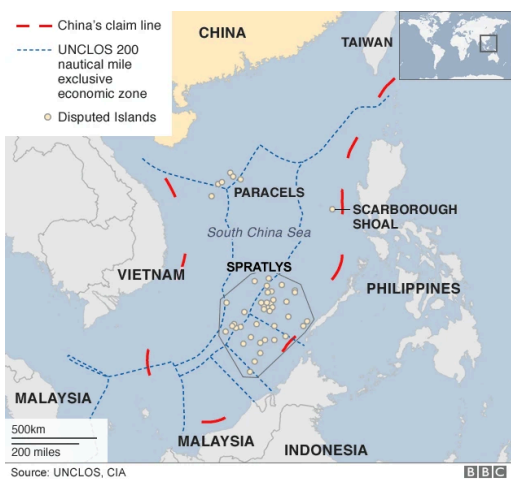
<sup>10</sup><https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/archives/asia-division/background-and-overview>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>

<sup>12</sup>[https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content\\_3.php](https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_3.php)



miles south and east from the southernmost province of Hainan.<sup>13</sup> Since around 2009, China has steadily increased efforts to consolidate its regional position, using its military, coast guard, and



maritime militia to harass foreign ships and extract resources in disputed areas. Starting in 2013, China has backed its expansive claims with naval patrols and artificial island-building, which it uses to base military and civilian assets.<sup>14</sup> In response, the U.S. has stationed military ships and planes near disputed islands in “freedom of navigation” operations, denying any involvement in the territorial disputes. Similarly, Japan has provided ships and military equipment to some claimants, like Vietnam and the Philippines, though it has no direct stake in the South China Sea. China roots this map in history, claiming that the Parcel and Spratly island chains were regarded as integral parts of the

Chinese nation for many centuries. These claims are mirrored by Taiwan and Vietnam, the latter of which has documents to prove its active rule over both the Paracels and the Spratlys dating back to the 17th century. The Philippines, another major claimant to the area, invokes geographical proximity to the Spratly Islands as the main basis of its claims.<sup>15</sup>

Some serious clashes in recent history have occurred between Vietnam and China, as well as some stand-offs between China and the Philippines. Although China claims to prefer bilateral negotiations, it is opposed to negotiating with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Philippines sought international arbitration under the jurisdiction of the UN Convention on the Laws of the Sea, and the arbitral tribunal ruled overwhelmingly in their favor. They determined that many major elements of China’s claim, including the nine-dash line and recent land reclamation activities, violated international law. China reacted negatively to this ruling, declaring that it was “null and void.”<sup>16</sup> It has also declared that it will not be bound by this “ill-founded” decision.<sup>17</sup>

Some fear the area is becoming a flashpoint, which would create potentially serious global consequences.

<sup>13</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.uscc.gov/research/south-china-sea-arbitration-ruling-what-happened-and-whats-next>

<sup>15</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>

<sup>16</sup>[https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Issue%20Brief\\_South%20China%20Sea%20Arbitration%20Ruling%20What%20Happened%20and%20What%27s%20Next071216.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Issue%20Brief_South%20China%20Sea%20Arbitration%20Ruling%20What%20Happened%20and%20What%27s%20Next071216.pdf)

<sup>17</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>

## STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY

Since its 1979 termination of its formal alliance with Taiwan, the United States has maintained a policy known as strategic ambiguity.<sup>18</sup> The recent increase in frequency of China's air force and navy activity around Taiwan signals increased probability of a military conflict over Taiwan. Strategic ambiguity is essentially the maintenance of a deliberate lack of clarity in the scope and scale of American diplomatic and military support for Taiwan. This uncertainty is intended to deter Chinese aggression, while also reminding both China and Taiwan that the U.S. does not explicitly affirm or reject Taiwanese independence.<sup>19</sup>

The Taiwan Relations Act, or the TRA, was passed by Congress in the same year that the formal alliance was terminated. The language of the TRA mirrors that of the formal alliance treaties the U.S. has with other East Asian allies, such as Japan and South Korea, but falls short of making an explicit defense commitment.<sup>20</sup> During the Biden administration, the U.S. and its allies reaffirmed their willingness to defend the status quo in the case of unilateral action from China.<sup>21</sup>

In 2023, China committed its largest single incursion into Taiwan. It dispatched 71 aircraft for military maneuvers around the area, following hundreds of flights, military exercises, and missile launches over the previous 18 months. In the face of China's rapid military development and rising aggression, strategic ambiguity and the pivotal deterrence it offers becomes dangerously tenuous. In order to have pivotal deterrence, where one state prevents two others from going to war, three key conditions must be met. First, the pivot (the United States) needs to have decisive military power over the two adversarial states (China and Taiwan). Second, both China and Taiwan must desire war more than the U.S. does. Finally, neither China nor Taiwan can be irrationally committed to war. When all three conditions are satisfied, the U.S. can use its decisive power to pressure whichever country is destabilizing the status quo. Since it avoids committing to a particular course of action, both China and Taiwan are unsure of its reaction and therefore avoid escalation.<sup>22</sup>

Since 2001, however, the Chinese military budget has increased fivefold, and it is currently in possession of the world's largest missile force, second-largest navy, and third-largest air force. Because the first two conditions of deterrence theory no longer hold, the United States is no longer capable of functioning as an effective pivot. In 1996, Beijing fired missiles over Taiwan, and after Washington

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<sup>18</sup><https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/emergence-collective-strategic-ambiguity-taiwan>

<sup>19</sup><https://warontherocks.com/2021/06/the-ambiguity-of-strategic-clarity/>

<sup>20</sup><https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>

<sup>21</sup><https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/emergence-collective-strategic-ambiguity-taiwan>

<sup>22</sup><https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/18/taiwan-us-china-strategic-ambiguity-military-strategy-asymmetric-defense-invasion/>

sailed two aircraft carriers through the strait, it refrained from further provocation. In 2022, however, when China responded to Pelosi's Taiwan trip with military exercises and missile overflights, the U.S. responded with merely verbal condemnation, despite China's increasing incursions.<sup>23</sup>

Currently, the conflict between China and Taiwan is a significant geopolitical security concern and a source of tension in the relationship between China and the U.S.. If China comes to the conclusion that the current U.S. administration's ambiguous stance indicates that Washington is unlikely to intervene, it may increase operation intensity. Without U.S. assistance, other countries in the region would be unlikely to intervene, and the perceived reliability of the U.S. as an ally will begin to erode internationally. The broader implications this would send to formal U.S. allies would destabilize security commitments in the region. Since China is the largest trading partner of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, and also possesses control over critical supply chains and technologies, the loss of the U.S.'s security guarantee could allow China to assume regional hegemony and escalate territorial conflict in the South China Sea.<sup>24</sup>

A source of continuous tension between China and the U.S. is the supply of arms sales from the U.S. to Taiwan. In 2024, in the wake of renewed Chinese aggression against Taiwan's new president, Lai Ching-te, the U.S. approved a potential \$2 billion arms package to Taiwan, including, for the first time, an advanced air defense missile system.<sup>25</sup> In the past, arms sales to Taiwan have been considered a violation of Chinese sovereignty, and this larger sale was no exception. Just after the weapons sales were announced, China urged the U.S. to stop arming Taiwan and vowed to take "resolute countermeasures" and "all measures necessary" in order to defend its national sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity. Taiwan responded that it was duty-bound to protect itself, and that it would continue demonstrating this determination despite China's recent increase in military activities and extraterritorial aggression.<sup>26</sup>

In response to the arms sale, China placed sanctions on seven U.S. companies, including two branches of Raytheon.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup><https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/18/taiwan-us-china-strategic-ambiguity-military-strategy-asymmetric-defense-invasion/>

<sup>24</sup><https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/01/trumps-ambiguous-stance-china-raises-risk-accidental-conflict-indo-pacific>

<sup>25</sup><https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-approves-potential-2-billion-arms-sale-taiwan-week-after-chinese-war-games-2024-10-26/>

<sup>26</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-vows-countermeasures-after-2-bln-us-arms-sale-taiwan-2024-10-27/>

<sup>27</sup><https://apnews.com/article/china-sanctions-us-military-sales-taiwan-33e27d5389740e4a1f6c2f1ff7381931>

## THE ECONOMY

In the final days of the Biden administration, sanctions were placed to restrict Chinese access to semiconductors, as well as on companies involved in mining, real estate, solar energy, and shipping. China responded to this with a vow to “defend its own sovereignty, security, and development interests.” China also responded with antitrust investigations into chip companies such as Nvidia, Intel, and Micron. Even before Donald Trump was sworn in, China began bracing for a trade war.<sup>28</sup>

Under the second Trump administration, new tensions are arising between China, Taiwan, and the U.S.. During his first term, Trump sought to rebalance the trade deficit with China, which was partly owed through outsourcing manufacturing jobs. In order to focus more on domestic production, the administration began a gradual approach to reviews of trade deficits and tighter tariff enforcement. In January 2018, Trump imposed heavy tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, as well as imported washing machines and solar panels. China retaliated with a tax on 128 U.S. products. In the following year, there was major trade escalation on both sides, and it wasn’t until 2020 that a deal was set to prevent further escalation of the trade war.

In his second term, Trump has already vowed to impose a 60% flat tariff across Chinese imports, along with additional tariffs to reduce drug and immigration flows, or as a deterrence against the development of an alternative currency.<sup>29</sup> So far, Trump has begun with a 10% flat tariff, which will inflate the prices of both raw materials and consumer goods. China retaliated with tariffs on oil, natural gas, and some machinery, as well as limitations on minerals used for high tech products.<sup>30</sup> Further significant increases in tariffs could disrupt supply chains and production, as well as escalate any tensions between the U.S. and China.<sup>31</sup> This marks the fifth time in a row that China has issued retaliations to tariffs rather than making necessary reforms. The first four times, which occurred during Trump’s first term, also did not produce the desired results.<sup>32</sup> Escalating a trade war between the U.S. and China will likely increase inflation, limit availability for both consumer products and raw materials, and escalate tensions between the two countries.

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<sup>28</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/17/business/china-us-trade-sanctions.html>

<sup>29</sup><https://newlinesinstitute.org/political-systems/u-s-china-taiwan-relations-under-the-second-trump-administration/>

<sup>30</sup><https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-tariffs-china-tariffs-what-to-know/>

<sup>31</sup><https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/05/economy/tariffs-trade-war-with-china/index.html>

<sup>32</sup><https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-tariffs-china-tariffs-what-to-know/>

### *Bloc Positions*

In China, Taiwanese independence is considered a massive violation of state sovereignty. In 2024, the Chinese Supreme Court voted to allow life imprisonment and even the death penalty for hard-line secessionists. Furthermore, the government encourages people to report Taiwanese “separatists,” whom they consider to be dangers to national security.<sup>33</sup>

In Russia, Putin has fully supported Chinese sovereignty. He describes China as a valuable ally and considers Taiwan to be an inalienable part of it.<sup>34</sup> Russian experts, mainstream media, policy journals, and online outlets display more reservations, but experts unequivocally follow the government in recognizing Taiwan as a part of China.<sup>35</sup>

France desires peace in the Taiwan Strait, but firmly believes that it should not become involved. In 2023, Macron affirmed that France still supported the status quo in Taiwan, as well as the One China policy. He advocated for a peaceful resolution to the situation.<sup>36</sup> As part of a joint statement following a G7 summit, Paris agreed with the need to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.<sup>37</sup>

Since 1972, the UK had maintained a consistent legal position on the status of Taiwan, which was that the future status of Taiwan was to be decided by the people of China and Taiwan.<sup>38</sup> In 2023, the British parliament referred to Taiwan as an “independent country” in an official document for the first time in history.<sup>39</sup> The UK values peace in the Taiwan Strait, and as part of a joint statement following a G7 summit, it agreed with the need to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.<sup>40</sup>

While the U.S. is committed to defending Taiwan in the case of a war with China, it does not support Taiwanese independence. Since 1979, when it switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing, it has maintained that it does not support a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan.<sup>41</sup> As part of a joint statement following a G7 summit, the U.S. agreed with the need to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>33</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce8dy437pdno>

<sup>34</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-says-china-is-russias-ally-backs-its-stance-taiwan-2024-11-07/>

<sup>35</sup><https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/08/taiwan-and-the-limits-of-the-russia-china-friendship?lang=en>

<sup>36</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65258129>

<sup>37</sup><https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/emergence-collective-strategic-ambiguity-taiwan>

<sup>38</sup><https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/time-update-uks-taiwan-policy>

<sup>39</sup><https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-parliament-calls-taiwan-independent-country-report-says-james-cleverly-visit-china/>

<sup>40</sup><https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/emergence-collective-strategic-ambiguity-taiwan>

<sup>41</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-us-does-not-support-taiwan-independence-2024-01-13/>

<sup>42</sup><https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/emergence-collective-strategic-ambiguity-taiwan>

The UN member states have never officially recognized Taiwan as a country. Within the UN system, Taiwan is referred to as “Taiwan, Province of China,” and Taiwanese citizens are not even allowed to enter the premises of the United Nations, regardless of the agency. This is likely in large part due to China’s rising power and influence in the UN.<sup>43</sup>

### Questions to Consider

- ❖ How does strategic ambiguity help or hurt Taiwanese independence? What resolutions might help resolve these issues?
- ❖ What role does the Taiwan Strait play in the global economy? How might potential allies consider its position?
- ❖ Is it better for international security if the U.S. formally commits itself to Taiwan or pulls out of the alliance entirely?
- ❖ How can the United Nations address China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea while maintaining regional peace?
- ❖ What mechanisms can be implemented to prevent military confrontations in disputed waters?
- ❖ How should ASEAN nations work together to counteract unilateral territorial claims in the region?
- ❖ What role should international maritime law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), play in resolving South China Sea disputes?
- ❖ How can the international community ensure freedom of navigation in contested waters?
- ❖ To what extent should military alliances be involved in South China Sea security concerns?
- ❖ How can diplomatic channels be strengthened to de-escalate tensions between China and neighboring countries with competing claims?
- ❖ What are the economic implications of continued tensions in the South China Sea for global trade?
- ❖ Should the UN consider peacekeeping measures or mediation efforts in the South China Sea dispute?
- ❖ How can smaller Southeast Asian nations ensure their sovereignty is respected despite China’s military and economic power?

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<sup>43</sup><https://verfassungsblog.de/taiwan-and-the-myth-of-un-general-assembly-resolution-2758/>

## Topic Two: Nuclear Disarmament in the Korean Peninsula

### Introduction to Topic Two

For many centuries, Korea was a single, unified country, ruled over by generations of dynastic kingdoms. In 1905, during the Russo-Japanese War, Korea was occupied by Japan, and five years later it was formally annexed. Korea existed under Japanese colonial rule until 1945, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union bilaterally decided to divide the Korean Peninsula into two occupation zones along the 38th parallel of the Korean peninsula. Over the next three years, the Soviet Union and its proxies established a communist regime north of the parallel, while in the south, the U.S. directly supported a new military government.<sup>44</sup>



The Soviet policies were largely popular with the majority of the North's laborer and peasant population, but most middle-class Koreans fled to the South, where the U.S.-backed government favored anti-communist, rightist ideas. The original objective was for the Koreans to decide their future independently. However, two years after the partition occurred, the Cold War began, and any attempts at reunification or compromise were circumvented by the unwillingness of the U.S. and the Soviet Union to cooperate.<sup>45</sup>

Five years after the division of Korea, the Korean War began. In 1950, the North Korean People's Army (KPA) invaded South Korea, aiming for a military conquest and forced unification under the communist North Korean regime. In the tense political atmosphere of the Cold War, the U.S., afraid that the Soviet Union and Communist China were backing North Korea, committed U.S. air, ground, and naval forces to the combined UN forces that were helping defend South Korea.<sup>46</sup> The KPA advanced rapidly, trapping the American and South Korean troops in a small perimeter surrounding the port of Pusan. In response, the UN encouraged its member forces to support South Korea. Many countries contributed troops to a UN force, including the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa.<sup>47</sup> General Douglas MacArthur, the commanding general of the United Nations Command (UNC), led the troops across the 38th parallel into North Korea in an

<sup>44</sup><https://www.history.com/news/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts>

<sup>45</sup><https://www.history.com/news/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts>

<sup>46</sup><https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/korean-war>

<sup>47</sup><https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/a-short-history-of-the-korean-war>

attempt to unify Korea under a non-communist government. The Chinese government issued warnings against these movements, but the UN forces continued moving toward the border between North Korea and Manchuria, which was marked by the Yalu River. In return, the Chinese attacked the UN forces, pushing them south of the 38th parallel, and the communist soldiers seized the southern capital, Seoul.<sup>48</sup> In 1951, the UNC retook Seoul and advanced back to the 38th parallel, and the two sides reached a stalemate. In the interest of avoiding drawing in China and the Soviet Union and escalation to a third world war, the Truman administration abandoned reunification plans. In 1953, President Eisenhower oversaw the signing of an armistice, relying on UN oversight and U.S. action during the war to deter North Korea from imposing communist rule on South Korea.<sup>49</sup>

The U.S. military bombed villages, towns, and cities across the northern half of the peninsula, causing large scales of damage to the country and destroying many cities. At least 2.5 million people died during the Korean War. Today, the majority of the Korean population resides in the South. A demilitarized zone (DMZ) runs roughly along the 38th parallel, and there has been extremely little movement across this border since 1953. There exists a continuing divide between the two countries as they continue along their radically disparate paths, adhering to radically disparate ideologies.<sup>50</sup>

During the Korean War, the UN condemned North Korea's invasion and passed UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 82, which called for the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of North Korean forces. Other important resolutions include the following:

- UNSCR 83: recommending UN members provide assistance to South Korea.
- UNSCR 84: authorizing the U.S. to establish and lead a unified command of military forces from UN member states, which would operate under the UN flag.
- UNSCR 85: called for UNC to determine requirements for relief and support to the South Korean people.<sup>51</sup>

### Problem Identification

## **NORTH KOREAN ARMS PROLIFERATION & RECENT AGGRESSION**

North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and ruled by Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un, has pursued nuclear research since the 1950s. In 1952, the regime established the Atomic Energy Research Institute and the Academy of Sciences, but it only became

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<sup>48</sup><https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/korean-war>

<sup>49</sup><https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/korean-war>

<sup>50</sup><https://www.history.com/news/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts>

<sup>51</sup><https://www.unc.mil/History/1950-1953-Korean-War-Active-Conflict/#:~:text=June%2027%2C%201950%3A%20United%20Nations,peace%20on%20the%20Korean%20Peninsula.>



capable of making real progress after establishing cooperation with the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> By 1980, North Korea was able to build a reactor capable of producing weapon-grade plutonium. Since the 1990s, the United States and North Korea have negotiated over its nuclear program, but North Korea has continuously advanced both its nuclear and its missile programs, despite efforts from the international community to eliminate them.<sup>53</sup>

By 2017, North Korea had conducted six nuclear weapons tests and claimed to have developed a hydrogen (thermonuclear) bomb, indicating its ability to build powerful, high-yield nuclear weapons. In the same year, it conducted its first successful testing for an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). In response to the increasingly frequent weapons testing, the U.S. deployed an anti-missile system in South Korea. In 2018, Kim Jong Un placed a freeze on weapons testing, but ultimately, nuclear negotiations reached a deadlock. In 2019 North Korea restarted weapons testing.<sup>54</sup>

In 2022, following a two-year lull in testing, North Korea began testing again at a much more rapid pace. The frequent tests continued into 2023, including its first solid-fuel intercontinental missile. If this missile, dubbed the Hwasong-18 and capable of launching more quickly and covertly than any of its predecessors, were to be successfully developed, it would decrease the likelihood of success of a preemptive strike on North Korea's arsenal.<sup>55</sup>

In 2024, North Korea fired a banned ICBM that flew for 85 minutes, the longest flight recorded so far. The U.S. and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres both condemned the launch, claiming that it was in clear violation of Security Council resolutions. On the same day, Kim Jong Un stated that the launch emphasized North Korea's "will to respond to our enemies" and considered it "appropriate military action." Kim also affirmed that North Korea "will never change its line of bolstering up its nuclear forces." The previous banned missile firing was in December 2023, and an assistant professor at the University of North Korean Studies stated that Pyongyang aims to develop missiles that can hit the U.S. mainland even if its warhead is larger and heavier, or if there are multiple of them.<sup>56</sup>

In January 2025, Kim Jong Un called for strengthening North Korea's nuclear forces. The country has been increasing its show of force by resuming missile tests, around the time Trump returned to office. He stated that North Korea faces "the world's most unstable security situation" due to its

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<sup>52</sup><https://kls.law.columbia.edu/content/north-koreas-nuclear-program-history#:~:text=Though%20North%20Korea%20actively%20pursued,a%20nuclear%20program%20in%20earnest.>

<sup>53</sup><https://kls.law.columbia.edu/content/north-koreas-nuclear-program-history#:~:text=Though%20North%20Korea%20actively%20pursued,a%20nuclear%20program%20in%20earnest.>

<sup>54</sup><https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/north-korea-crisis>

<sup>55</sup><https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/north-korea-crisis>

<sup>56</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgry8rpzn4o>

long-running confrontation with “the most vicious hostile countries.” Analysts have estimated that North Korea may have enough fissile material to construct up to 90 nuclear warheads.<sup>57</sup>

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

In 2018, North and South Korea began a diplomatic rapprochement. Kim Jong Un attended three summits with the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, and also met three times with the U.S. president, Donald Trump. The two Korean leaders signed statements that pledged to work jointly toward denuclearizing the Korean peninsula and officially putting an end to the war between the two countries. In 2020, North Korea blew up a North-South liaison office, and Kim announced a new phase in inter-Korean relations, labeling South Korea an enemy. In the same year, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, North Korea implemented one of the strictest border closures in the world. They did not report any COVID-19 cases for months and rejected foreign vaccines. Entry restrictions even applied to foreign dignitaries, resulting in a near-complete isolation of the country.<sup>58</sup>

The previous South Korean president, Yoon Suk Yeol, took a more hardline stance on North Korea than his predecessor. He advocated for a reorientation of the unification ministry and has also worked to strengthen military cooperation with the United States. He also worked to improve ties with Japan, a move reciprocated by previous Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Biden, Kishida, and Yoon met for the first standalone trilateral summit in August 2023 to strengthen strategic cooperation. Over the course of 2022, both North and South Korea took on a less compromising position, strengthened their alliances, and increased military provocations and preparedness.<sup>59</sup>

Since the division of the Korean Peninsula, inter-Korean relations have been primarily hostile. Even so, the two states pursued cooperation in promoting reconciliation and reunification until around 2019, though each country’s definition of that differed. In 2022, North Korea destroyed a joint liaison office with South Korea.<sup>60</sup> Their already-tenuous relationship deteriorated further after South Korea suspended part of a joint military agreement as a response to an illegal satellite launch by North Korea. In response, North Korea terminated its participation entirely.<sup>61</sup> Then, in December 2023, Kim Jong Un declared that he would end the country’s long-stated reunification goal, citing South Korea’s alliance with foreign powers and its hostility toward North Korea as reasons to give up on a peaceful reunification.<sup>62</sup> He called for constitutional revisions that would redefine South Korea as a “hostile

<sup>57</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/north-koreas-kim-calls-bolstering-nuclear-forces-kcna-says-2025-01-28/>

<sup>58</sup><https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/north-korea-crisis>

<sup>59</sup><https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/north-korea-crisis>

<sup>60</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1wnlxwq2o>

<sup>61</sup><https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2024-02/news/north-korea-ends-inter-korean-military-agreement>

<sup>62</sup><https://www.brookings.edu/articles/on-the-brink-why-inter-korean-relations-have-reached-a-new-low/>

state” and the “principal enemy.” In 2024, North Korea blew up roads and railways that connected it to South Korea, once seen as representations of inter-Korean cooperation. The KPA claimed the destruction was “a self-defensive measure for inhibiting war” and a response to the frequent U.S. nuclear presence in the region and war exercises in South Korea. They described it as an attempt to “completely separate” the countries. In response, South Korea performed a show of force in which it fired on its own side of the border, as well as increasing surveillance of the North.<sup>63</sup>

Since then, inter-Korean tensions have steadily risen, with Kim Jong Un and his sister, Kim Yo Jong, issuing numerous nuclear threats against South Korea and the U.S..<sup>64</sup> To this day, North Korea is technically still at war with South Korea, and its nuclear arsenal is rapidly growing.

### **POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN SOUTH KOREA**

On December 3, 2024, former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared a six-hour martial law.<sup>65</sup> The martial law was in part justified by accusing opposition lawmakers, without evidence, of being North Korean sympathizers. This act was reminiscent of South Korea’s long history of military-authoritarian rule, and the international community took away from the incident “assessments that the martial law incident exposed vulnerabilities in South Korean society.” Due to North Korea’s acceleration in weapons testing and its increasingly vigorous rhetoric against the U.S. and South Korea, there were fears that North Korea might choose to exploit this crisis.<sup>66</sup> Although North Korea has yet to respond, the tense relationship between the two Koreas and their increasing arsenals mean that any source of political instability or visible vulnerability may pose a significant threat to regional security that could draw in international allies and escalate to serious global conflict.

#### *Bloc Positions*

During the Korean War, the UN denounced the North Korean invasion and its member states generally supported South Korea. The countries that provided military aid included the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa.<sup>67</sup>

China established formal relations with North Korea in 1949. During the war, China supported North Korea. China’s only mutual defense treaty to date was signed with North Korea in 1961. In 2021, this mutual defense pact was renewed for another twenty years. Although China has claimed

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<sup>63</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/videos/c70wgxr4zndo>

<sup>64</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1wnxlxxwq2o>

<sup>65</sup><https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/penn-sas-south-korea-crisis-explained>

<sup>66</sup><https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/north-korea-south-korea-martial-law-declaration-insane-kim-jong-un-rcna183723>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx26eglg3wo>

<sup>67</sup><https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/a-short-history-of-the-korean-war>

that it is in favor of North Korean denuclearization in order to prevent a regional arms race, it vetoed sanctions after Pyongyang's missile testing regime in 2022.<sup>68</sup>

Russia also established a mutual defense treaty with North Korea in 1961, only days after China. To date, North Korea only has a mutual defense pact with these two countries.<sup>69</sup> In 2024, North Korea was confirmed to have provided both troops and arms to assist Russia in their full-scale invasion of Ukraine, hinting at deepening ties between Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin.<sup>70</sup>

France supports sanctions aimed at initiating the complete denuclearization of North Korea. It has supported the adoption of resolutions that include total embargo on arms trading with North Korea, as well as a ban on imports like coal, iron, and ores. France supports inter-Korean dialogue and negotiations, and has offered to provide support for the dismantling of North Korean nuclear facilities.<sup>71</sup>

The UK has also called for an end to North Korea's illegal weapons programme. At the 2025 UN Security Council meeting on North Korea, the UK affirmed the need for every nation to condemn North Korea's actions.<sup>72</sup> The UK also has a global strategic partnership with South Korea and a progressing bilateral relationship in areas including joint military exercises, sanctions enforcement, and cybersecurity cooperation.<sup>73</sup>

The U.S. has had historical conflict with North Korea and the two countries do not have diplomatic relations. In 1950, it imposed almost a complete economic embargo on North Korea following the initial invasion. In recent years, the U.S. has imposed a wide range of sanctions on North Korea, primarily in an attempt to restrict funding for its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. The U.S. also does not maintain diplomatic representation in North Korea, instead providing its citizens with limited consular services through the Swedish embassy.<sup>74</sup> South Korea is an important U.S. ally

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<sup>68</sup><https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship>

<sup>69</sup><https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship>

<sup>70</sup><https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/12/north-korea-and-russias-dangerous-partnership/revival-north-korea-russia-relationship>,

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2024-07/news/north-korea-russia-strengthen-military-ties>

<sup>71</sup><https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/crisis-and-conflicts/north-korea-france-s-position/#:~:text=Faced%20with%20this%20crisis%2C%20France,irreversible%20denuclearization%20of%20North%20Korea.>

<sup>72</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/any-nations-refusal-to-condemn-north-koreas-actions-represents-direct-complicity-in-furthering-its-illegal-weapons-programme-uk-statement-at-the-un>

<sup>73</sup><https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/uk-south-korea-strategic-partnership-living-its-promise>

<sup>74</sup><https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-north-korea/>

and the two countries have a mutual defense pact.<sup>75</sup> In 2024, South Korea and the U.S. released a joint statement along with Japan, condemning nuclearization and UNSC resolutions by North Korea and Russia.<sup>76</sup>

The UN Security Council has adopted several major sanctions resolutions on North Korea in response to nuclear and missile activities since 2006. UN member states have the authority to interdict and inspect North Korean cargo within their territory, and to seize and dispose of any illicit shipments. In general, UN member states support North Korean denuclearization, with multiple stringent multilateral sanctions in place.<sup>77</sup>

### *Questions to Consider*

- ❖ How can the international community address North Korea's nuclear weapons program while ensuring regional stability?
- ❖ What role should the United Nations play in enforcing denuclearization agreements with North Korea?
- ❖ How can diplomatic engagement between North and South Korea be strengthened to prevent military escalation?
- ❖ To what extent should economic sanctions against North Korea be maintained or adjusted to encourage compliance with international law?
- ❖ How can the global community respond to North Korea's frequent missile tests without provoking further hostilities?
- ❖ What are the humanitarian implications of North Korea's military spending on its own population?
- ❖ How should the United Nations and regional partners handle North Korea's cyber warfare capabilities and threats to global security?
- ❖ What mechanisms can be put in place to prevent accidental military conflicts along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)?
- ❖ How should nations balance deterrence and diplomacy when engaging with North Korea?
- ❖ What role do China and Russia play in influencing North Korea's military actions, and how should the UN navigate these relationships?

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<sup>75</sup><https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/north-korea-crisis>

<sup>76</sup><https://kr.usembassy.gov/111924-joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/>

<sup>77</sup><https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/un-security-council-resolutions-north-korea>,  
<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/north-korea-crisis>

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