

## **TOPIC: The Shifting Military Balance in East Asia After the Trump-Kim Summit**

Committee: GA1(Disarmament and International Security Committee)

### **Committee Introduction**

The First Committee deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

It considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the United Nations; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

*Extracted from the official website of the United Nations*

### **The Trump-Kim Summit**

After World War II, Korea was split into North and South Korea. North Korea was supported by the Soviet Union, and South Korea was supported by the United States. Since then, North Korea has had a poor relationship with the United States. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, they were still in hostile relation.

This situation seems to have gotten worse after Donald Trump became the president of the United States in 2017. Trump and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, repeatedly threatened each other with nuclear weapons or missiles. A war seems to be on the verge. But in 2018, North Korea unexpectedly released goodwill to the United States by participating in PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Then North Korea has invited Donald Trump to meet their leader Kim Jong Un, and Trump agreed.

On June 12, 2018, the Trump-Kim summit took place in Singapore. Many countries focused their attention on the issues at this summit because it was the first meeting between the North Korean leader and the US president after the Cold War. At this summit, Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un signed a 4-point peace pledge. First, the United States and the DPRK (North Korea) commit to establishing new U.S.-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples from both countries for peace and prosperity. Second, the United States and the DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. Third, reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK promises to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And the last, the United States and the DPRK commit themselves to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

After this summit, the United States stopped the joint military exercises with South Korea. Peace in East Asia seems to be just around the corner. Yet, there are still many problems to be solved. The main issue of the Trump-Kim summit was the denuclearization of North Korea. Since North Korea developed nuclear weapons, the regional security of East Asia has been under threat. In the summit, Kim Jong Un made a promise of denuclearization, but he said nothing about the definition of denuclearization and he didn't make clear if the denuclearization of North Korea would be fully accomplished.

In addition to the denuclearization of North Korea, regional security in East Asia is also an important issue. The denuclearization of North Korea has much to do with the military balance of East Asia. With the implementation of North Korea's denuclearization, there is indeed a change underway in the relative balance of power in East Asia. How to ensure the regional security in this situation is also worth our attention.

### **The denuclearization of North Korea**

#### 1. An Introduction to Nuclear Weapons

A nuclear weapon is a device designed to release energy in an explosive manner as a result of nuclear fission or nuclear fusion, of which they are categorized by. Fission weapons, also known as atomic bombs, release less energy in an explosion than fusion weapons, more commonly referred to as thermonuclear bombs or hydrogen bombs, but both are powerful and highly destructive weapons.

Nuclear weapons are fundamentally different from conventional weapons because of the vast amount of energy they can release and the effects they cause, such as high temperatures and radiation. Light and heat capable of burning the skin, damaging the eyes and starting fires are released in a nuclear explosion, followed by shock waves which could spread fires further. The winds that follow shock waves can hurl a person against a wall several times the force of gravity. Within 8 kilometers, few people are expected to survive after such a blast.

Nuclear explosions also emit nuclear radiation, which can be separated into initial and residual radiation. Initial radiation is produced within a minute of the explosion and consists of gamma rays, neutrons, beta particles and a small number of alpha particles. Gamma rays and neutrons can penetrate most substances, and produce harmful effects on living organisms, thus making them one of the biggest causes of casualties in such an explosion. Residual radiation is emitted after a minute of the detonation, contaminating large areas of land.

Because of the great damage a nuclear weapon can cause, the United States decided to fund a large sum of money into the creation of an atomic bomb upon entering World War II. The first nuclear weapons developed were bombs delivered by aircrafts, and they were applied by the US to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then, warheads developed for strategic ballistic missiles have replaced such weapons

and became the most important and widespread type of nuclear weapons.

Only nine countries in the world are believed to be in possession of nuclear weapons, and North Korea is one of them. While some experts estimate it only holds around 15 to 20 nukes, the United States Intelligence agencies believe it may have up to 60. Other experts have stated that North Korea has enough Uranium to produce six new nuclear bombs every year.

North Korea has been running nuclear tests since as early as 2006, with the most recent one being their sixth, in September of 2017; they have claimed that this nuclear test was for a hydrogen bomb. In addition, one of North Korea's recent missiles, the Hwasong-15, can theoretically travel for up to 13,000 kilometers, covering almost the whole world within its range, with the exception of Latin America and Antarctica. Though both these claims have been questioned, there is no denying that North Korea's continual development of nuclear weapons has begun to pose a threat to many countries.

## 2. The Conclusion and Aftermath of the Trump-Kim Summit

On June 12th, 2018, the president of the United States, Donald Trump, and the political leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-Un, met up in Singapore for a historic summit, the North Korea-United States Summit. Following the summit, a joint statement, signed by both Trump and Kim, was released, containing the following points:

- a. The United States and the DPRK commit to establishing new United States-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity.
- b. The United States and the DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.
- c. Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to working toward completing denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
- d. The United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

Right after the release of this document, Trump announced that he would halt "very provocative" and expensive regular military exercises the US holds with South Korea. The annual Freedom Guardian live-firing drills scheduled for August were suspended indefinitely, along with two other marine exchange program training exercises. The United States has since stated that "there could be additional measures should North Korea follow suit with productive cooperation."

It seems as though the US has been committing to their side of the deal, the situation doesn't appear to be the same for North Korea. Following his trip to North Korea in July, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, though heavily criticized by North Korea for his "gangster-like demands", announced that he would be visiting again in September. But the trip was cancelled in late August, due to the

“insufficient progress being made in dismantling Pyongyang’s nuclear program.” Such doubt comes from observations made in late July, when spy satellites spotted continuing activity at a site that has produced ballistic missiles, raising questions about whether North Korea was working on new missiles. The UN atomic watchdog and the International Atomic Energy Agency have both published reports questioning North Korea’s commitment to denuclearization.

This may have been caused by China and Russia’s unwillingness to cooperate with the United States. While the US has pressed for the two countries to enforce sanctions on North Korea to push its progress on denuclearization, both have said they needed additional time to investigate the US allegations and put a six-month hold on the request. In June, China, backed up by Russia, suggested that the Security Council consider lifting sanctions on North Korea if North Korea did make progress with negotiations. In addition, China and Russia have also been stopping the sanctions committee from demanding that all countries halt shipments of petroleum products to North Korea immediately.

Washington still wishes for its goal of Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Denuclearization (CVID) to be achieved; North Korea hopes to continue making nuclear weapons whilst developing their economy and attracting foreign investment; China, Russia, South Korea and other countries all want something of their own. With the involvement of so many nations, it is unclear as to what may follow in later events, but one thing is for certain—the denuclearization of North Korea is not a problem that can just be put aside. A solution, a good one, must be implemented to deal with the growing threat of North Korea’s nuclear weapons.

### 3. The Definition of “Denuclearization”

#### The discussion of denuclearization during the summit

Throughout the summit, the term “denuclearization” was said repeatedly by both sides, yet two leaders never discussed anything more specific. One can easily allude that two nations meant differently and did not reach an agreement on the matter. The following is the stance of both sides and some problems that the public are worried about.

#### US

US and South Korea have been trying to achieve denuclearization for quite a long time. Their main policy is for nuclear program in North Korea to reach “complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement” (CVID). However, the acronym did not appear even once in the summit. And this goal is quite challenging to achieve.

#### North Korea

What Kim-Jong Un meant when he mentioned denuclearization was the denuclearization of the “Korean Peninsula,” which includes South Korea and the US troops-. Though US has not stationed any nuclear weapons in South Korea since 1991, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula would concern any US navy vessels, therefore implying a removal of US military force within South Korea borders. Kim-

Jong Un also left out detailed information such as specific approaches to denuclearization or any concrete timelines, which cause doubt on North Korea's willingness in this cooperation.

### Problems

According to US strategy, in order to see complete and verifiable dismantlement efforts being made by North Korea, there has to be some inspectors being sent into the nation to do the work. But ever since North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003, the nation has not been open to international inspectors. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible for the denuclearization act to be irreversible. Even though North Korea is willing to give up the facilities and equipment it currently owns, it still owns the knowledge and technology to make nuclear weapons.

## 4. Possible Ways to Achieve Denuclearization

### Setting up regular follow-up session

As previously mentioned, the denuclearization conversation between two leaders was merely the tip of the iceberg. Hence, it is critical to set up follow-up discussions.

The first step is for both sides to clearly define the concept of "denuclearization," whether it is "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" or something else. Without a common ground, it's impossible to have any furthermore action.

Denuclearization is a quite challenging goal. It could be a long process for North Korea to fully denuclearize. Therefore, two nations must come up with concrete steps that can be achieved. These steps might begin with confirming the numbers of nuclear weapons in North Korea. Establishing such steps can help make sure North Korea does not expand its armory during the process.

Denuclearization also means that North Korea might feel threatened because of its weakened military power. Through the follow-up meeting, US can deliver security assurances to North Korea, which might also build trust between the two countries. The verification of the denuclearization is also an important part that requires more discussions. For the outside world to track the process, inspections have to be done. IAEA has tried to do so for years, but it hasn't succeeded. That is, there has to be inspectors on the North Korean soil, while North Korean government does not agree with that condition. Therefore, in the follow-up, two parties can reach a consensus on how the denuclearization will be verified, perhaps even invite a third-party organization to join their conversation.

Follow-up sessions can help make sure all plans are getting on the right track and constant communication between both sides proceeds.

### Continuing imposing sanctions

Besides United States, Europe Union and other countries have also imposed sanctions on North Korea, mainly aiming to isolate North Korea on economic level

over the past few years. Though this measure effectively drew North Korea back to the conversation of nuclear weapon, many experts are worried that the aggressive action might agitate North Korea and therefore cause more damage beyond imagination.

Ever since the summit, United States has unpredictably changed its stances. First there were words that it would lift the sanctions against North Korea. Then United States decided to extend sanctions because of "extraordinary threat."

Sanctions certainly will be a way to put pressure on North Korea, but the question is whether the action will effectively accelerate the progress of denuclearization.

### **East Asian Situation after the Trump-Kim Summit**

Since North Korea had nuclear weapons, some subtle changes have taken place in East Asia. North Korea has nuclear weapons, which means it can pose a greater threat to the surrounding area. This may cause China's control over it to decline. And North Korea's nuclear weapons also pose a threat to Japan and South Korea. This may make the alliance of the United States, Japan and South Korea stronger and may give the United States more power in Asian affairs. However, Kim Jong Un participated in the Trump-Kim summit through a special plane borrowed from China and after the Trump-Kim summit, Kim Jong Un flew to China to meet with Xi Jinping. Consequently, China may still have a certain degree of influence on North Korea. In addition, because Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it will have great influence in the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons. This fact may make Russia have more say in the international arena.

Now, North Korea is planning to denuclearize. If it actually does so, some changes will arise in East Asia. And we may need to do something to respond to such changes.

### **North Korea's weapons of mass destruction**

In the Trump-Kim summit, Kim Jong Un promised to denuclearize. And after the summit, North Korea seemed to be really starting to dismantle missiles, though this matter cannot be fully confirmed.

But apart from nuclear weapons, North Korea may have other weapons of mass destruction, such as biochemical weapons. North Korea has signed the Biological Weapons Convention but has not yet signed the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, some evidence shows that North Korea is likely to possess biochemical weapons. Biochemical weapons may also pose a threat to North Korea's surrounding countries, so it is also an issue worth our attention.

### **The troop of United Nation in South Korea**

The United States has garrisons in many countries, such as Japan and South

Korea. The legitimacy of the US military which stations in South Korea comes from the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea. According to this treaty, the United States and South Korea must help each other when the war occurs in the Asia-Pacific region, and the US military has the right to withdraw from South Korea. South Korea also has the right to demand the withdrawal of US troops, but whether this right can be exercised freely remains unsettled. And we still can't determine the attitude of the South Korean authorities towards the US military in South Korea.

### **Question to Ponder**

1. What is the proper definition of "denuclearization"?
2. How can the implementation of denuclearization be ensured in North Korea?
3. How can US or other countries deal with North Korea's chemical and biological weapons?
4. If North Korea really achieves complete denuclearization in the future, is it possible to ensure that South Korea still has the right to decide if the US military will stay in South Korea or not?

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