

Forum (Council, Committee, Assembly): United Nations Membership Council (UNMC)**Student Officer(s):** Beomjoon (BJ) Park, Thu Tran, Seungwoo (Sean) Jang**TOPIC 4: On the Membership of Korea**[Include a link to the specific LibGuide for the topic](#)**I. Introduction to the Topic**

The topic of the membership of Korea is a unique topic that delves into the membership of a special delegation named the “United Korea” which is a country where both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have undergone unification. In the United Nations Membership council, there will be three Korean delegations in total: Republic of Korea, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and United Korea. It will be up to each of the delegates to craft their stance whether in favour or against the unification of Korea based on the country’s policies and interests.

After Japan’s surrender in World War 2, the 35 year old rule on Korea came to end and Korea was finally liberated. However, it was immediately divided again when the North Korean People’s army invaded the south, initiating a 3-year conflict. The war, now known as the Korean War, was a proxy for the cold war as the US troops occupied the south, while the Soviet Union occupied the North. The war was put to a ceasefire when the US military commanders, Korean People’s Army, and the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army signed the Korean Armistice Agreement, putting a pause to the war.

Since the armistice, both the RoK and DPRK has continued its efforts towards unification, notably through treaties such as the July 4 South-North Joint Statement, June 15th North-South Joint Declaration, and most recently, the Panmunjom Declaration. However, there are significant implications towards unification that will directly affect not just the Korean peninsula but in the global spectrum. This will depend significantly on how the two Koreas are unified. Whether the unification will result in a single government of South Korean democracy or the continuation of North Korea’s dictatorship will impact the trajectory of the world. If the United Korea were to continue to be a close ally with the US, it would put significant pressure on the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation to a notable extent. This could further exacerbate tensions between the global superpowers, potentially leading to more conflicts. Therefore, it is crucial for member nations to consider the direction in which the unification will be formed, and reach an agreement through multilateral diplomacy.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Communism: An ideology that all property is owned by everyone and private property is completely abolished. Communism attempts to provide absolute equality among all citizens to make sure everyone has equal rights, opportunities, resources and responsibilities. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is currently a communist state and is led by a dictator.

Reunification: Reunification refers to the act of unifying again. Unification is when 2 or more societies, people, ideas, etc. come together to create a whole. In the context of this topic, Democratic People’s

Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea used to be unified but are currently separated. This means that the reunification is specifically applied to a unifying act between the two countries.

GDP: GDP stands for Gross Domestic Product. It is a total of all goods and services produced within a country. It could be used as a measurement to figure out how much economic value and activity is happening within a country.

Peninsula: An area of land that is almost entirely surrounded by water or a land that is projecting out into a body of water.

Democracy: A system of government where the power is given entirely to the people or the citizens. This means that they have the right to make decisions about the country and how the country is governed. A democratic government is not ruled by a dictator, autocrat or a powerful religious leader.

III. Key Stakeholders

Republic of Korea: The Republic of Korea is a country that is the southern part of Korea and borders the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Republic of Korea is very relevant to the topic because RoK was originally a part of the unified model of Korea. For the reunification, the delegate of the Republic of Korea would try to include the country's way of thinking into the resolutions to make sure the reunification is preferable for the RoK.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is also a key stakeholder similar to the Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has very different ideals and beliefs to the RoK and this is mostly because of the cultural development that happened after division. This should be reflected in the resolutions the DPRK delegate creates. For instance, they would probably want a unification under the communist regime.

United Korea: The United Korea model is also a key stakeholder in the topic. The idea of a unified Korea is desirable for both DPRK and RoK but there are many consequences and side effects that may occur if a reunification does happen. This is why the United Korea delegate must consider both perspectives and come to a conclusion on exactly how the membership of Korea will be applied in the UN.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Regional cleavage: Ever since the line at the 38th parallel was drawn, Korea has remained divided in many ways. In the north, supported and influenced by the Communist forces of the Soviet Union (USSR) and China, pursued a more authoritarian approach. In the south, supported and influenced by the USA, pursued a more democratic approach under its guidance. Following the division of the Korean peninsula to the USSR and USA, there have already been harsh divisions between the two areas that began to separate the two. Although what is now North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) and South Korea (Republic of Korea, RoK) are not as influenced by the USSR and USA respectively, their political cultures have maintained the stark contrast between authoritarianism and democracy (Lee et

al.). This harsh difference in political culture would make unification a challenge, as creating a unified government between two regions that have stood at very different ends of the political spectrum will be difficult.

In addition to the political difference, there is also a strong economic difference between the two regions. While the RoK has a freer market the DPRK's economy is tightly controlled by the government. The RoK has become a major economic world power, and is also an important exporter—primarily of cars. The DPRK's government is more closed and exports have been firmly limited by the government (Bajpai). The difference between government regulations of these economies will also pose a difficult obstacle in the unification of the Korean peninsula, as well. A unified government would likely not be able to regulate economic policies that serve as a compromise between the two, or preserve the regional differences.

There is a considerably large gap between the economic statuses of these two regions as well. As of 2021, the estimated GDP for the DPRK was 16.3 million USD, while the estimated GDP for the RoK was 1.6 billion USD. The GDP growth rate for the two regions is also quite different (DPRK: 0.4%; RoK: 2%) (United Nations). Attempts to reunify the peninsula will be faced with the challenge of uniting these economies, and creating policies to serve as a balance between the economies of the DPRK and RoK will be quite difficult. This is in consideration of the two governments' approaches to interacting with their economies as well.

Frozen conflict: One obstacle to the solidification of any crystallized relationship between the DPRK and the RoK the Korean War is technically not over, but instead on an approximately 70 year (and running, hopefully) ceasefire. It is indeed true that an armistice was signed in summer 1953, but all it did was cease the fighting and establish the DMZ (as well as the establishment of a commission to enforce the ceasefire and repatriation of prisoners). An agreement was established between the RoK and the DPRK in 2018 (Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula) that declared an official end to the Korean War and a united effort for peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), but the DPRK retracted their participation in the armistice in November of 2023 (Le Monde et al.). The vague terms regarding the end of the Korean War as of currently are an obstacle to peace in the Korean peninsula, and a potential reunification of the Korean peninsula as a whole. This is because the undetermined state of peace in the Korean peninsula represents a lack of mutual agreement on the peninsula, which is a crucial aspect of maintaining peace between the DPRK and RoK.

Spotty agreements: There have been several agreements in the past regarding not only solidified peace and established relations and communications between the DPRK and RoK, but also a potential course of action towards reunifying the two Korean nation-states. Unfortunately, most of these agreements were dismissed due to a lack of agreement between involved stakeholders. A “Sunshine Policy” for example, was established in the form of an industrial complex between the two countries that aimed to unite families and additionally act as an economic booster for the DPRK in 2003; this fell through in 2009 as DPRK-RoK relations started going downhill, however. 2018 and 2019 saw some summits between the DPRK, RoK and the USA as well which was able to establish an agreement between the DPRK and RoK— Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula in 2018—but that fell through in 2023. Many of these agreements were broken because of violent encounters between the DPRK and RoK (e.g RoK warship sunken in 2010 allegedly by a DPRK submarine, and

other clashes stretching back to the 20th century), and more recently by the DPRK's development of a nuclear program (first officially confirmed in 2005) which the RoK saw as an imminent threat not only to their sovereignty and security but also to the peace of the Korean peninsula (Young et al.). The inconsistent peace balance in the Korean Peninsula thus far has posed as a potential threat to the security of the Korean peninsula and a potential unification of the Korean peninsula.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1910-1945	Japan forcibly annexes the Korean Empire and establishes the Japanese Government-General of Joseon.
1950-1953	The North Korean People's Army invaded South Korea, initiating a 3-year war in the Korean peninsula. In the end an armistice was agreed to put a ceasefire.
1953	The Korean peninsula is separated into north and south: Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea, respectively.
1972	The July 4 South-North Joint Statement is signed to agree on the principles of achieving unification. It is considered the Koreas' first step towards unification.
2000	The June 15th North-South Joint Declaration was adopted, which initiated the process of unification by achieving a set of 5 agreements that the two Koreas will take for unification.
2007	The October 4th Declaration was signed in Pyongyang, where it improved the Korean relations on the basis of the June 15 Joint Declaration.
2018	The Panmunjom Declaration was signed. The presidents of RoK and DPRK agreed to cooperate on officially ending the Korean War and starting a new era of peace.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Unite or Divide: The simple option is that delegates can continue to keep the Korean Peninsula divided. This would allow delegates and their respective member states to not have to deal with the challenges of an economic and political reunion. However, delegates who may opt for this solution should understand that the RoK and DPRK have fostered previous attempts to move towards peace and unification (that fell through), so that should be addressed. The failure of these past agreements has mostly been due to violent interactions between RoK and DPRK, as well as DPRK's nuclear program that caused tensions to rise and agreements to fall through. Additionally, the vague terms surrounding the officialized end of the Korean

War and the question of resolving tensions between the DPRK and RoK may potentially be a point to address in a resolution, in order for them to peacefully coexist. Another option could be to move towards a unification of the Korean peninsula, but delegates should understand that this must be a gradual process if delegates wish to pursue this path in an effective and peaceful manner. Merging two member states which have been independently identified since 1991 (Young et al.) and developed separately from each other cannot peacefully be an instant progress. This was demonstrated in the past by failed agreements and collaborative efforts between the DPRK and RoK regarding the process of peace and unification that fell through. On the question of whether the Korean peninsula should be united or not, delegates should approach this topic carefully and in accordance with their country's stance, as well as caution regarding the sustainability and effectiveness of the solutions proposed.

Common Beliefs: Delegates can choose to address the different political cultures and economies in the DPRK and RoK if they wish to unite the two nation-states. Despite sharing a similar cultural heritage, the DPRK and RoK have been diverged into two different economic and political realities, which creates a cleavage between them (Bajpai). Delegates can choose to find a compromise between these two different economies and political cultures in order to unite the peninsula, if it aligns with the delegation's stance. However, the DPRK and RoK are already two established nation-states with international recognition as two distinct nation-states, so delegations that aim for the unification of the Korean peninsula should be aware of the challenges this can create. Specifically, the sovereignty of the two nation-states means that there are separate forces, governmental regimes, economies, industries and societies for each region. Over the years, all of these factors have diverged (except for historical roots and cultural roots, although there are slight regional differences). This divergence must be addressed to create a peaceful and unified Korean Peninsula, because differences in ideology, living conditions and other factors contributing to life, culture and society keep the Korean people divided albeit any potentially formal unifications. Common beliefs in a united government is also an issue. The democratic regime of the RoK and the authoritarian regime of the DPRK hold harshly different values, methodology and policies, which will be difficult to compromise on in the merging process of the governments. In essence, the cleavages between the DPRK and RoK are an essential issue that must be addressed in order to unify the Korean peninsula. Delegates must approach methods on how to combine the governments and societies in order to achieve unification.

Binding Agreement: As previously mentioned, various agreements over the years between the DPRK and RoK have fallen through. This has been due to tensions and disagreements between the two parties, causing the adherence to the agreements to fall apart. Even if delegates may be against a unification of the peninsula, an agreement to formalize peace between the DPRK and RoK should be addressed. Whether delegates wish to make an agreement regarding a unification process, diplomatic relations, or peaceful resolutions, delegates should look to the sustainability and effectiveness of the agreement—especially considering the adhering strength of the agreement to the DPRK and RoK.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

In order to propose fruitful solutions, delegates must understand the history of the Korean peninsula, DPRK-RoK relations, and relations between the delegate's country and the nation-states of the Korean

peninsula. DPRK-RoK relations and tensions have many roots in the history of the Korean peninsula (especially 20th century history), and are crucial to understanding the topic and underlying issues as a whole. Looking into the history of the delegate's country and the nation-states of the Korean peninsula is also important, because delegates should be aware of the extent to which their member state is involved in the political climate of the Korean peninsula (e.g history of support, diplomatic relations, potential stances etc.). One crucial thing about writing a resolution for UNMC is delegates should always remember that membership is not a black-and-white question, but a multi-faceted one where resolutions don't necessarily have to demand for immediate membership but can instead focus on laying out an established path towards membership (a point to remember to all delegates, regardless of stances: the progress in membership is the main focus of UNMC, and this "progress" does not always have to be 100%). Membership of any state, and especially in cases like a united Korea, is hardly an easy progress, and delegates should take all possibilities, historical factors, past action and potential repercussions of all solutions into account when writing their operative clauses.

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IX: Additional Resources



