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# Conflict on the Korean Peninsula: North Korea and the Nuclear Threat

## THE **CHOICES** PROGRAM

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# CHOICES for the 21st Century Education Program

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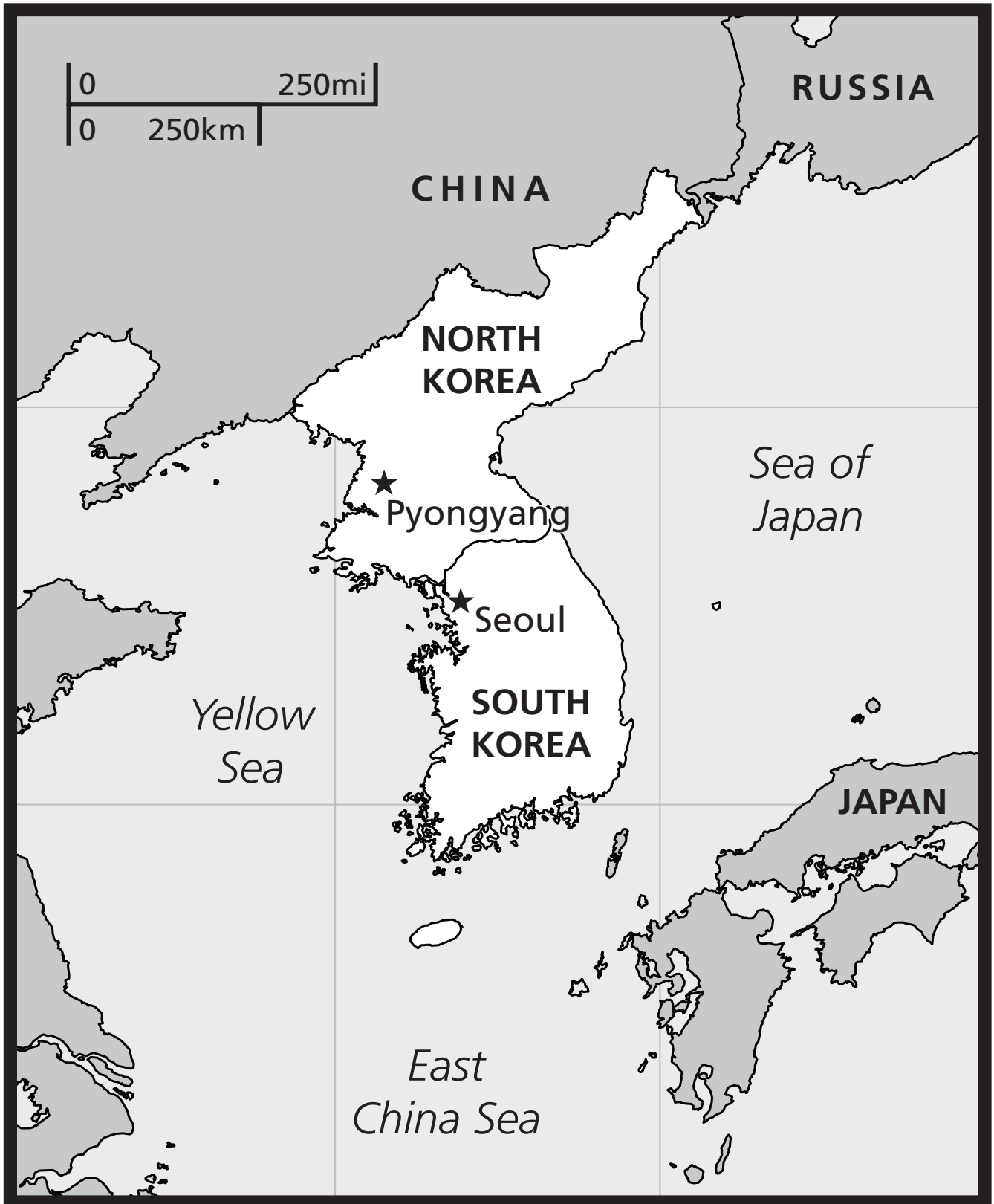
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## North Korea and its Neighbors



Map by Alexander Sayer Gard-Murray.

## Introduction: North Korea and Nuclear Weapons

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North Korea today is one of the most isolated societies on earth. Despite recent economic growth, millions suffer from hunger and malnutrition. North Koreans are kept separate from the rest of the world by an extremely repressive state. They are forbidden to have any contact with the world outside of North Korea by mail, telephone, internet, or radio.

At the same time, North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world. There are one million soldiers in its military, many of whom are poised along the border with South Korea. South Korea and North Korea have been locked in a hostile conflict since the Korean War in the early 1950s. At the end of war, the countries did not sign a peace treaty; technically they are still at war. There have been outbreaks of violence over the years. For example, in March 2010, a torpedo sank a South Korean warship; forty-six sailors lost their lives. Most believe that the torpedo was fired by North Korea, although North Korea denies responsibility. In November 2010, after a South Korean military exercise near the border, North Korea fired more than 180 artillery shells into South Korea killing four South Koreans and wounding sixteen. South Korea responded by firing shells back.

While these attacks are of great concern, a greater worry is North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In February 2013, North Korea conducted an underground test of a nuclear device. Officials claimed that it was larger and more successful than two previous tests (conducted in October 2006 and May 2009). Leaders around the world resoundingly condemned North Korea's action. Many expressed concern and frustration. North Korea, an isolated state with few allies, made it clear to

the world that it continues to pursue nuclear weapons. North Korea's quest for nuclear weapons continues despite nearly two decades of high-level international talks aimed at convincing it to end the program. Analysts believe that North Korea has enough weapons-grade plutonium for six to eight nuclear weapons, much of it acquired in the last decade.

Why does North Korea want nuclear weapons? Experts have many theories. Some say that North Korea is raising tensions in order to secure greater economic aid from the international community, in return for further promises to end its nuclear program. North Korean officials argue that the weapons are to deter attacks from other countries and for self-defense. They claim that the country is still under threat from South Korea and the United States, one of South Korea's biggest allies. The United States has had tens of thousands of troops stationed in South Korea since the 1950s. Others argue that North Korea wants nuclear weapons to increase its international prestige, particularly among countries like the United States, China, and Russia. Still others point to domestic concerns—in particular North Korea's young, new leader Kim Jong Un's desire to prove his power and credibility—as contributors to North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

In order to understand North Korea and its desire for nuclear weapons, it is important to understand the history of the Korean Peninsula. What role have other countries played in Korea? Why is Korea divided? Why are U.S.-North Korean relations hostile today? Understanding the answers to these questions will help you as you consider how the United States should respond to the challenge of a nuclear North Korea.

## Korea and the Outside World

Today we think of the Korean Peninsula—North and South Korea—as a place of division and conflict. But Korea was a politically unified state for much of the last fourteen hundred years. Centuries of shared history, culture, language, and ethnicity have created a strong sense of national identity among Koreans. It is only in the last half century that the peninsula has been divided, ruled by two governments following divergent ideologies.

The people on the Korean Peninsula were first united in the seventh century, when the kingdom of Silla conquered other kingdoms in the region. Outside of a few brief periods, Korea remained independent and unified under a centralized monarchy from 668 CE until the start of the twentieth century.

### ***What was Korea's historical relationship with other countries?***

Korean society developed in close interaction with other societies in Northeast Asia. In particular, Korea's written language, arts, religions, and forms of government were heavily influenced by China throughout its history. In turn, Korean culture exerted a great deal of influence on Japan.

Although Korea remained independent before the twentieth century, it also acknowledged China as the supreme authority in East Asia, as did other states in the region. Successive leaders in Korea paid tribute to the Chinese kingdom. In return, Korea received military protection from China against invasions from other states.

For example, the Chinese came to Korea's aid during a Japanese invasion at the end of the sixteenth century. Japan was driven back but the war devastated Korea. Thirty years later, Korea was invaded again, this time by the Manchus, a dynasty that ruled China from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. After these invasions, the Korean government decided to follow a policy of isolationism. It limited its interactions with both Japan and China, and closed its borders to all other foreigners.

In the nineteenth century, Western countries increasingly pushed for trade and diplomatic relations as well as colonial territories in East and Southeast Asia. They often referred to Korea as the "Hermit Kingdom."

### **Korea Divided**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Korea was one of the last places in Asia that had not been forced open by Western imperialism. British, French, and U.S. diplomats and militaries had all unsuccessfully attempted to secure the right to trade in Korea. In the end, it was Japan that opened Korea's borders. In 1876, the Japanese forced Korea to sign the Treaty of Kanghwa, which gave Japan special trading rights and privileges in Korea. Over the next few years, Korea signed similar treaties with other European countries and the United States.

Competition for influence in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century was fierce. Countries wanted access to Korea's ports as well as to its gold mines and forests. China in particular saw Japanese and Russian advances on the peninsula as a threat to its historic economic and cultural dominance of Korea. Japan fought wars with China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905) to retain its supremacy in Korea. In 1905 Japan occupied the peninsula and in 1910 annexed Korea as a colony.

Japanese colonialism, which lasted until 1945, was often harsh and oppressive. Many groups formed during this period to oppose Japanese rule. At the same time, as a result of Japanese economic policies, Korea was the second-most industrialized country in Asia (after Japan) by the end of World War II.

### ***Why was Korea divided in two?***

The Cold War shaped the next phase of Korean history (see box on page 3). At the end of World War II, the Japanese forces in Korea surrendered to the United States in the south and to the Soviets in the north. The superpow-

## The Cold War

The end of World War II marked the beginning of nearly forty-five years of ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. This conflict, known as the Cold War, was the dominant foreign policy concern of the United States and Russia between the late 1940s and the late 1980s. During this period both countries devoted vast resources to their militaries. Each had nuclear weapons and were in competition for power and influence around the world.

During the Cold War, the United States adopted a policy of containing the spread of communism around the world. For their part, the Soviets were interested in extending their influence and establishing allies in different parts of the world. Although the superpowers never engaged in direct military action against one another, they opposed each other by becoming involved in other wars, in countries where communism had gained a foothold. The first of these wars was fought on the Korean Peninsula in the early 1950s. While the Korean War ended in a stalemate, it was a turning point in international relations. The war reversed the disarmament of the United States and USSR after World War II and firmly established the Cold War as a military conflict.

ers created a line of demarcation between the two regions. This was supposed to be temporary, but U.S. and Soviet officials failed to come to an agreement to unify the country. This line divided the country in two—a communist north and a capitalist south.

***“No division of a nation in the present world is so astonishing in its origin as the division of Korea; none is so unrelated to conditions or sentiment within the nation itself at the time the division was effected; none is to this day so unexplained; in none does blunder and planning oversight appear to have played so large a role. Finally, there is no division for which the U.S. government bears so heavy a share of the responsibility as it bears for the division of Korea.”***

—Gregory Henderson, former U.S. Foreign Service officer, 1974

Two separate governments were established, each claiming to be the legitimate government of the entire peninsula. In the south, now the Republic of Korea, U.S.-backed Syngman Rhee became president and set up a hard-line anti-communist administration. In the north, renamed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the government was led by

Kim Il Sung, a staunch communist who had lived for many years in China as well as in the Soviet Union. Kim Il Sung would lead North Korea for the next four-and-a-half decades.

### ***How did the Korean War begin?***

Kim Il Sung hoped to reunify the two Koreas by conquering the South, and he sought permission to invade from Soviet leader Josef Stalin.

***“Lately I do not sleep at night, thinking about how to resolve the question of the unification of the whole country. If the matter of the liberation of the people of the southern portion of Korea and the unification of the country is drawn out, then I can lose the trust of the people of Korea.”***

—Kim Il Sung to Soviet embassy officers, 1950

Stalin agreed, and on June 25, 1950, the North launched an invasion backed by Soviet equipment and military advisors. The North Koreans captured Seoul, South Korea's capital, in a matter of days.

### ***Why did the United States intervene in Korea?***

For the United States these developments





USAMHI.

U.S. bombers drop napalm (a flammable explosive) on North Korean railroad lines in the early 1950s.

were a cause for great alarm. China had become a communist state and tensions with the Soviets in Europe were extremely high. U.S. President Truman believed that communist aggression needed to be checked wherever it occurred in the world.

U.S. troops stationed in Japan were quickly sent to South Korea. But North Korean forces continued to advance, pushing U.S. and South Korean troops to the southeastern tip of the country. The United States called for assistance from the UN. (The Security Council at that time did not include communist China, and the Soviets were boycotting its meetings.) A coalition of fifteen countries under the auspices of the United Nations landed troops in South Korea, retook Seoul, and forced North Korean troops to retreat. UN troops pushed North Korean forces north, towards the border of China. This advance triggered a large-scale intervention by the Chinese, who said they would not allow North Korea to fall.

The Korean War lasted for another three years. More than three million Koreans were killed or wounded, and as many as four million people died in the conflict, including nine hundred thousand Chinese troops and 36,940

U.S. troops. Although a truce was negotiated, South Korea's president refused to sign it. This meant that the North and South were technically still at war, although the fighting had ended. The border between North and South Korea remained.

### ***How were relations on the peninsula after the war?***

The Korean War left both North and South Korea devastated: millions had been killed, millions more were displaced from their homes, and the war had destroyed much of the economic infrastructure (including things like factories, agriculture, transportation, and communications) in both countries. The war also created a cultural division among Koreans, fed by wartime animosity and governments of opposing ideologies.

The war created a physical barrier between the Koreas as well: a three-mile-wide demilitarized zone (DMZ). But in fact, the border between the Koreas became a highly militarized area where each side faced the other down on a daily basis. Today the DMZ is the most heavily armed border in the world.

In addition, the United States left fifty-thousand troops in bases near Seoul. In the late 1950s, it also brought nuclear weapons to bases in South Korea. While the number of weapons changed over time, the United States did not remove its last nuclear weapons from South Korea until 1991. Today, 28,500 U.S. troops remain in South Korea.

While North and South Korea talked separately about unification, hostility remained fierce in the decades after the truce. Each side continued to pursue unification, but this time by covert attack. There were numerous efforts at infiltration, espionage, and provocation.

By 1976, small scale fighting had resulted in the deaths of over one thousand Koreans and forty-nine U.S. troops. North Korea hoped to eliminate the South Korean government, which it saw as a puppet of U.S. imperialism. For example, in 1971 and again in 1974, North Korean agents attempted to assassinate South Korea's President Park Chung Hee. Continued tension between the two countries also led to attacks against civilians. For instance, in 1987, a North Korean agent planted a bomb on a Korean Airlines flight, killing all 115 people on board. This attack was aimed at disrupting the 1988 Olympics that would take place in Seoul.

### ***How did North and South Korea develop after the war?***

After the Korean War, the economies of both countries were in tatters. North Korea's economy bounced back much more quickly than the South's. Helped by significant assistance from the Soviet Union, China, and a number of Eastern European countries, North Korea rapidly industrialized. By the late 1950s, it had one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The North Korean government focused its economic efforts on strengthening the military. It felt it was threatened by the U.S. presence in the South and the lack of a peace treaty between the two Koreas.

In contrast, South Korea's economy faltered for many years. In 1953 it was one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite a great deal of assistance from the United States and other Western countries, the economy did not begin to improve until the 1960s.

Both countries had authoritarian governments in the decades that followed the war. South Korea was led by successive, U.S.-backed military regimes from 1961 until the 1980s. It continued to maintain a close political relationship with the United States. For example, to support the United States in the Vietnam War, South Korea sent more than 300,000 troops in total, making it the second largest foreign force in the war (behind the United States).

In North Korea, the country remained controlled by one man: Kim Il Sung. Kim crushed all political opposition and created a highly centralized government that gave him unlimited power. North Korea maintained close relationships with China and the Soviet Union. Its economy was socialist (run by the government). The government controlled every facet of life in North Korea, including employment, social services, and the media. Kim built a national ideology based on ideas of militant nationalism, political independence, and self-reliance.

Kim also created a mythology around himself that some experts have likened to a religious cult. North Korea's government told its people that Korea was a chosen land and the site where civilization originated. Images of Kim—known to his people as “The Great Leader”—hung in every shop, home, and subway car. Everything that Kim said became law. No dissent or criticism was permitted. One could be imprisoned for simply sitting on a piece of newspaper with a photo of



North Koreans pass by a mural of Kim Il Sung (left) and Kim Jong Il (right).

Photograph by Mike Connolly. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.



Kim or his son. The outside world has known little of North Korea since the 1950s, due to the government's strict limit on the entry of foreigners. But refugees and defectors have told stories of abuse, torture, and public execution of those who do not conform with Kim's ideology.

## The Korean Peninsula Today

In the 1970s, the economic fortunes of the Koreas reversed. South Korea began to pursue a policy of rapid industrialization and integration into the world economy. The economy grew in leaps and bounds. Today South Korea has one of the twelve largest economies in the world, centered on high tech sectors and computer manufacturing. The later part of the twentieth century also saw great political change. In the 1980s the country instituted some democratic reforms and in 1992 Kim Young Sam was elected the country's first civilian president in three decades.

In contrast, North Korea's policy of economic self-sufficiency left the country ill-equipped to participate in the global economy. When Soviet aid was cut in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economy shrunk dramatically. Starvation and hardship were widespread. According to the North Korean government, as many as three million people perished from famine in the mid-1990s. During this period, the United States became the largest humanitarian donor to North Korea.

Lacking resources, the North Korean government was unable to continue to control every aspect of its citizens' lives. It allowed certain changes, including the existence of some private businesses. Then, in 1994, the North's Great Leader Kim Il Sung died. The post of president is eternally held by Kim Il Sung, even after his death. The country held a three year mourning period for its lost leader.

Many observers believed that North Korea's communist system would collapse under the economic strain, much like what happened in other communist states in Eastern Europe at the time. But North Korea endured.

Power passed to Kim's son, Kim Jong Il, who became the head of state. (Kim Jong Il was known as "The Dear Leader.") In 2011, Kim Jong Il died and his son, Kim Jong Un became the leader of North Korea.

### *What is life like in North Korea today?*

North Korea remains one of the world's most isolated societies. People in North Korea have very little access to the world beyond their borders. All media in North Korea is state-run. According to the media rights group Reporters Without Borders, North Korea is the world's worst violator of press freedom. No television or publications from outside the country are allowed, and civilians caught listening to foreign news sources are subject to harsh punishment. In addition, the North Korean government strictly controls travel both into and out of the country. Over the years, tens of thousands have fled North Korea, mainly for economic reasons and to escape starvation. Many settle in China and South Korea. Once they leave, most no longer have contact with their families and cannot return for fear of severe punishment.

The economic challenges of the last decade have led to some changes in North Korean society. After depending on the state for decades to supply basic necessities, North Koreans were forced to find alternatives when the economy collapsed in the 1990s. Today, the government's control over the people is no longer as strong as it was before the collapse.

## The Korean Peninsula at a Glance

	North Korea	South Korea
Area	120,538 square km	99,720 square km
Population	24.5 million	48.9 million
Life expectancy	69 years	79.3 years
GDP	\$40 billion	\$1.62 trillion
Per capita GDP	\$1,800	\$32,400

Source: The CIA World Factbook.

North Korea has been dependent on food aid since the economic crisis, and the UN estimates that more than a third of North Korea's population is dependent on this assistance. In 2008, North Korea's economy experienced its largest growth rate in recent years, boosted by increased agricultural production and the country's many natural resources. Nevertheless, many North Koreans continue to cope with shortages of food, fuel, and power on a daily basis.

Overall, many parts of North Korean society remain unchanged. Nearly 100 percent of North Koreans are literate. Schools continue to teach students about the mythic beginnings of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and the country of Korea. Their birthdays are celebrated as national holidays, with elaborate mass games (see image).



Photograph by Kok Leng Yeo. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>.

Performers at the mass gymnastic performances that are held regularly to commemorate national holidays such as the birthday of Kim Il Sung. Thousands of performers participate in these games. The mural in the back, which changes throughout the course of the performance, is created by thousands of school children holding colored signs.

### ***How did the end of the Cold War affect the Korean Peninsula?***

The end of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of an era. For the United States, it meant the end of more than four decades of nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. For North Korea, it meant that aid and support from the Soviet Union ceased. North Korea sought to improve relations with the United States but was met with a cold shoulder due to U.S. concerns about North Korea's repressive policies, its sponsorship of terrorism, and its radical ideology.

Despite the end of the Cold War, the United States maintains 28,500 troops in South Korea at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars per year. The troops are there to demonstrate a U.S. commitment to South Korean security. Many South Koreans have come to see U.S. policy as an obstacle to better relations with North Korea and many resent the presence of U.S. forces in their country. Recently the United States has begun pulling

its troops back from the DMZ to bases deeper in South Korean territory.

North Korea today maintains one of the largest armies in the world, with more than a million troops. South Korea's military is slightly smaller, but its military expenditures are much higher. The vast majority of both forces are stationed near the DMZ.

### ***How are relations between the two countries?***

After decades of hostility, relations between North and South Korea began to improve in the late 1990s. In order to promote reconciliation, South Korea encouraged interaction between the two countries and offered humanitarian aid and economic investment to the North. This policy became known as the "sunshine policy." South Korea established a number of business zones over the border, where South Korean businesses could open factories and employ North Korean workers. In 2000, for the first time since the states were created in 1948, the leaders of the two Koreas met in a North-South summit. Many lauded

By Edward N. Johnson, U.S. Army.



North Korean soldiers look south across the DMZ.

South Korea's President Kim Dae Jung for his policies. In 2000 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. But critics argued that the sunshine policy was helping to prop up a hostile, oppressive regime in North Korea.

Despite the efforts of President Kim Dae Jung, relations between the two countries are not normalized. For example, for more than fifty years, there has been no direct communication (phone calls or mail exchange) or free travel between the two countries, at least for the general population. There are deep social rifts that have been left by Korea's division. The South Korean Red Cross estimates that as many as ten million families are separated by the border, and most have not had contact in decades. There are also many unresolved issues in North-South relations. For example, South Korea claims that the North continues to hold at least one thousand South Koreans in prisons. In addition, armed skirmishes have continued between the two countries. Both governments contend that their ultimate goal is unification of the peninsula. But technically, the two countries are still at war.

In the last few years, relations between the two have grown increasingly chilled. After a decade of relatively peaceful cooperation, the 2008 election of Lee Myung-bak as South

Korea's president ushered in an era of increased tensions. Lee has made some of the South's aid to North Korea conditional on the North's commitment to end its nuclear weapons program, much to the anger of North Korean officials. The sinking of the South Korean naval vessel in March 2010, and the exchange of artillery fire in November 2010 have raised tensions to a new level.

## North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Over the last few decades, North Korea has signaled its intention to pursue a nuclear weapons program. North Korea's nuclear program stretches back to the years after the Korean War. At that time, North Korea signed a number of agreements with China and the Soviet Union to build its nuclear capacity, at least in part to help rebuild its devastated economy. North Korea's first nuclear reactor, built with Soviet help, became active in 1967. At the time, many countries around the world were experimenting with nuclear power as an alternative fuel source to supply electricity. It was only in the 1980s that observers became concerned that North Korea was using its nuclear capabilities not only to create nuclear power but also to create nuclear weapons.

### *How did the United States and its allies respond to the North Korean nuclear program in the 1990s?*

In 1985, North Korea signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a treaty in which countries that do not have nuclear weapons agree not to acquire them. But in the late 1980s, U.S. satellites detected evidence that North Korea was increasing its nuclear capabilities in order to create nuclear weapons. International concern intensified in 1993 when North Korea banned inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from entering the country. That same year,



North Korea threatened to withdraw from the NPT.

The United States, led by President Bill Clinton, began to meet with North Korea. After difficult negotiations, in 1994 the United States and North Korea signed the “Agreed Framework.” North Korea agreed to suspend construction of reactors that could produce weapons-grade plutonium as a by-product. In exchange, the United States made a commitment to take the lead in construction by 2003 of a reactor that would meet North Korea’s energy needs without producing weapons-grade plutonium. (Japan and South Korea would be principle funders in the construction of this reactor.) It also agreed to provide energy and other forms of economic aid in the interim. In addition, the United States agreed to work towards normalization of political and economic relations between the two countries.

The 1994 Agreed Framework did not last. Many Republican representatives in the United States were distrustful of North Korea and did not believe the North Korean government would give up its nuclear program. North Korea was also suspicious of the United States and concerned that it would not keep its end of the bargain. With little Congressional support for the agreement, in 1999 the United States announced that the light water reactors would not be completed in 2003 as promised, but would be delayed until 2007 or 2008. North Korea threatened to resume its nuclear program if the 1994 agreement was not fulfilled.

In addition to nuclear weapons, many in the international community were also concerned about North Korea’s missile capabilities. In 1998, North Korea conducted a test, firing missiles over Japan and into the Pacific Ocean. Missile technology could give North Korea the capability to fire a nuclear weapon from within its borders (as opposed to dropping it by plane, as was done by the United States in the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki).



Edward N. Johnson, U.S. Army.

U.S. and South Korean soldiers monitor the DMZ, from the south looking north.

### ***What did President Bush say about North Korea in his 2002 State of the Union Address?***

The United States became less willing to negotiate with North Korea after the election of George W. Bush to the presidency. During President Bush’s first administration, the U.S. government refused to negotiate with North Korea until it took steps to dismantle its nuclear program.

Following September 11, 2001, the Bush administration began to confront regimes it considered a threat to U.S. security. North Korea fell into this category. In his State of the Union speech in January 2002, President Bush condemned North Korea as part of an “axis of evil” (which also included Iran and Iraq). Bush criticized the North Korean government for starving its citizens while threatening the world with missiles and weapons of mass destruction. He warned that he would not allow North Korea to threaten the United States. He cancelled work on the light water reactors and suspended energy assistance. Tension between North Korea and the international community heated up once again.

### ***How did tensions escalate in 2002?***

In the fall of 2002, U.S. officials discovered that North Korea had developed a separate uranium-enrichment program, in violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. North Korea

expelled weapons monitors from the IAEA, announced that it was beginning production of nuclear materials, and withdrew from the NPT. In response, the United States, Japan, and South Korea cut their supplies of oil to North Korea and halted construction on the two nuclear reactors.

Experts feared that if North Korea had nuclear weapons, it might sell weapons or nuclear technology to other countries or to terrorists. North Korea demanded direct negotiations with the United States, but refused to sit down to talks until the United States proclaimed that it would not attack North Korea with military force. (The United States had recently invaded Iraq.)

***How did the international community deal with North Korea's nuclear program?***

In August 2003, six countries—the United States, Russia, China, South Korea, North Korea, and Japan—met in the first of a series of meetings to negotiate an end to North Korea's nuclear program. Delegates met frequently over the next few years in what became known as the “six-party talks.”

Despite the efforts of the international community, in February 2005 North Korea announced to the world that it had nuclear weapons. In July 2006 it conducted additional missile tests and in October 2006 conducted its first nuclear test. Because the blast from this underground test was small, many experts believed that it was not entirely successful. Within days, the UN Security Council unanimously passed a resolution to impose significant economic and diplomatic sanctions on North Korea for its actions.

When the six-party talks resumed in February 2007, the delegates reached a tentative agreement. In exchange for fuel and other economic aid, North Korea began disabling its plutonium-producing reactor. It also handed over documentation of its past nuclear activities to the six-party delegates. Many believed that North Korea was on its way to renouncing its nuclear weapons program for good.

***“This can be a moment of opportunity for North Korea. If North Korea continues to make the right choices, it can repair its relationship with the international community....”***

—U.S. President Bush after North Korea provided documentation of its nuclear weapons program, June 2008

In late 2008, the United States removed North Korea from its list of countries that sponsor terrorism as part of an additional agreement. But North Korea's position on its nuclear program reversed yet again in 2009, when it conducted its second nuclear test.

***How did North Korean missile tests affect international relations?***

Relations on the Korean Peninsula took a turn for the worse in early 2009. South Korea's President Lee announced that South Korean aid would be tied to the ending of North Korea's nuclear program. Shortly after, North Korean officials announced that they would no longer abide by previous agreements to ease military tensions on the peninsula.

In April 2009, North Korea launched a rocket that it claimed was carrying a communications satellite. Many believed that, in fact, North Korea was conducting a long-range missile test. The UN Security Council condemned the launching. In response, North Korea quit the six-party talks and expelled UN observers. One month later, it conducted a second underground test of a nuclear device—this time more successfully.

***“The Democratic People's Republic of Korea successfully conducted one more underground nuclear test on May 25 as part of the measures to bolster up its nuclear deterrent for self-defence.... The test will contribute to defending the sovereignty of the country and the nation and socialism and ensuring peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and the region around it.”***

—From an announcement by North Korea's government-run media, May 25, 2009

Weeks later, North Korea conducted a variety of additional missile tests. North Korea's actions increased regional tension and drew widespread condemnation. South Korea announced that it would intercept North Korean ships suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction.

Within weeks the Security Council agreed to impose additional sanctions on North Korea. On June 12, 2009 the Council unanimously passed a resolution authorizing UN members to inspect North Korean vessels that they suspect might be carrying banned materials or weapons. North Korea has stated that it will consider the interception of any of its ships as an act of war.

The North Korean government has continued to insist on bilateral talks with the United States. The Obama administration has made it clear that it plans to take a strong stance against North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

***“North Korea is not only deepening its own isolation, it's also inviting stronger international pressure—that's evident overnight, as Russia and China, as well as our traditional allies of South Korea and Japan, have all come to the same conclusion: North Korea will not find security and respect through threats and illegal weapons.”***

—U.S. President Obama, May 26, 2009

### ***How have tensions increased in recent years?***

The death of Kim Jong Il in 2011 and the assumption of power of his youngest son, twenty-seven-year-old Kim Jong Un has raised questions about both the intentions and the stability of the North Korean government. In addition, a series of serious military incidents heightened tensions in the region and put North Korea in the international spotlight.

In March 2010, a torpedo sank a South Korean naval vessel killing forty-six South Korean sailors. The torpedo was most likely from a North Korean submarine. North Ko-

rea denied responsibility for the sinking. In a second incident, in November 2010, North Korea showed a new and previously unknown facility for producing nuclear materials to a U.S. scientist. This discovery came as a shock and prompted calls for increased diplomacy and tightened sanctions on North Korea. The discovery of the nuclear facility was overshadowed later that month by North Korea's artillery attack that killed and injured South Korean civilians and soldiers. Although South Korea fired back, some in South Korea were dissatisfied with their government's response.

In February 2013, North Korea conducted a third and more powerful nuclear test than its first two. Leaders around the world resoundingly condemned North Korea's action.

***“The danger posed by North Korea's threatening activities warrants further swift and credible action by the international community. The United States will also continue to take steps necessary to defend ourselves and our allies.”***

—President Barack Obama,  
February 12, 2013

U.S. President Obama has stated that North Korea's actions are a threat to international peace. Experts believe that North Korea has not yet developed the capacity to launch a nuclear weapon via missile, but long-range missile tests in 2012 increased fears that North Korea is closer to being able launch a nuclear weapon at another country. Analysts believe that North Korea has enough weapons-grade plutonium for six to eight nuclear weapons.

### ***What is the U.S. position on North Korea?***

The Obama administration argues that the international community negotiated with North Korea in the past because it believed that North Korea was willing to give up its nuclear program. Now, many believe that North Korea has no intention of giving up its nuclear capabilities. Obama's aides have stated that the president no longer wants to negotiate a gradual dismantling of North Korea's nuclear

program, but instead wants to secure a permanent, irreversible end.

The United States and the international community face critical policy decisions about North Korea and its nuclear weapons program. In the past, policy choices have been affected by what policy makers believe are the reasons behind North Korea's aggressive behavior and nuclear weapons program. Does North Korea want nuclear weapons to increase its international prestige? Does it believe it needs them to deter an attack by the United States? Is North Korea using its nuclear program as a bargaining chip to secure additional food, fuel, and security guarantees from the international community? Is North Korea's aggressive behavior related to the transfer of power from Kim Jong Il to his son Kim Jong Un? Is Kim Jong Un pursuing nuclear weapons as a way to increase his own domestic power or is it a policy supported by all of North Korea's government? The answers to these questions have determined, in large part, the policy debate on this issue.



## Chronology of North Korea and Nuclear Weapons

1958	The United States deploys nuclear weapons to South Korea as part of its Cold War strategy.
1962	With Soviet help, North Korea establishes a nuclear research facility in Yongbyon. The Soviets also help North Korea create a two-kilowatt nuclear reactor, which becomes operational in 1967.
1977	North Korea signs an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), allowing the IAEA to monitor its reactor and research facility.
1985	The United States announces that it has intelligence information that North Korea is building a secret nuclear reactor.
1985	North Korea, under duress, signs the NPT in return for Russian promises to build reactors for nuclear power. According to the NPT, countries must also sign concurrent agreements with the IAEA. North Korea delays signing the IAEA's Full Scope Safeguards Agreement—which would allow inspectors to monitor its nuclear facilities—until 1992.
1986	North Korea begins building a reactor at Yongbyon, with Soviet help.
1991	The United States withdraws its remaining nuclear weapons from South Korea as part of its larger policy of disarmament.
1991	North and South Korea set up a Joint Nuclear Control Committee to ensure that neither country has nuclear weapons in the future.
1993	North Korea bars inspectors from entering the country. It also announces it will withdraw from the NPT, but later suspends its withdrawal.
March 1993	The <i>U.S. News &amp; World Report</i> reports that Iran and North Korea are cooperating in developing ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.
1994	The “Agreed Framework” is signed between North Korea and the United States. North Korea will freeze and dismantle its plutonium-based nuclear weapons program and end its nuclear weapons research in return for help building two reactors for nuclear power. The funding for the reactors will come primarily from South Korea and Japan.
August 1998	North Korea tests a missile, firing over Japan and into the Pacific Ocean.
November 1998	High level talks between the United States and North Korea take place in Pyongyang over North Korea's suspected underground nuclear facilities.
September 1999	North Korea pledges to end its long-range missile tests. The United States eases its economic sanctions against North Korea for the first time since the end of the Korean War in 1953.
2001	Construction begins on the U.S.-sponsored nuclear reactors, way behind schedule. In 2000, North Korea had threatened to restart its nuclear program if the United States did not compensate it for the loss of electricity caused by this delay.
October 2002	U.S. officials discover a North Korean uranium enrichment program.
November 2002	The United States, Japan, and South Korea halt their supply of oil to North Korea (they supplied this oil as part of the 1994 agreement) and stop construction on the two nuclear reactors.
December 2002	North Korea expels the IAEA.
January 2003	North Korea withdraws from the NPT.
August 2003	North Korea joins the first round of six-party talks.

<b>February 2004</b>	Second round of six-party talks.
<b>June 2004</b>	Third round of six-party talks.
<b>February 2005</b>	North Korea announces that it has nuclear weapons.
<b>July, September 2005</b>	Fourth round of six-party talks. An agreement is reached: North Korea will dismantle its nuclear programs in exchange for additional aid. The U.S. says it has no plans to invade and will respect North Korea's sovereignty.
<b>November 2005</b>	Fifth round of six-party talks.
<b>January 2006</b>	North Korea announces it will not return to negotiations until the United States removes financial restrictions it had imposed in 2005.
<b>July 2006</b>	North Korea launches seven missiles into the Sea of Japan. The UN Security Council passes a resolution condemning the tests and demanding North Korea stop its missile program.
<b>October 9, 2006</b>	North Korea announces that it has conducted an underground nuclear test. The small blast leads many to doubt the success of this test.
<b>October 14, 2006</b>	The UN Security Council unanimously adopts a resolution to impose significant economic and diplomatic sanctions on North Korea.
<b>February 2007</b>	Sixth round of six-party talks. The delegates reach a tentative agreement on disarmament in exchange for energy aid, along with a timetable of "initial actions" and deadlines.
<b>July 2007</b>	North Korea closes five nuclear reactors, including the one in Yongbyon, after \$25 million in frozen North Korean assets are released.
<b>September 2007</b>	Israeli planes bomb a site in Syria. The United States later says the site was an unfinished nuclear reactor, being built with North Korean help and modelled after the reactor in Yongbyon.
<b>November 2007</b>	North Korea, monitored by international observers, begins disabling its reactor in Yongbyon.
<b>June 2008</b>	Many months after the original deadline, North Korea hands over documentation of its past nuclear activities.
<b>July 2008</b>	The six countries agree on steps to continue disarmament: North Korea is to finish disabling its Yongbyon reactor by October and the United States, Russia, Japan, and South Korea must deliver fuel and other economic aid.
<b>October 11, 2008</b>	The U.S. removes North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terror.
<b>April 5, 2009</b>	North Korea launches a rocket that it claims is carrying a communications satellite. Many believe it is a cover for another long-range missile test. The UN Security Council imposes additional sanctions.
<b>April 14-25, 2009</b>	North Korea announces that it will quit the six-party talks and restart the partially disabled plant at Yongbyon. It expels UN observers.
<b>May 7-12, 2009</b>	The United States announces that it is ready for direct talks with North Korean officials. North Korea dismisses the offer as "useless."
<b>May 25, 2009</b>	North Korea conducts a second underground nuclear test.
<b>June 12, 2009</b>	The UN Security Council authorizes UN member states to inspect North Korean vessels suspected of carrying banned weapons or materials.
<b>March 26, 2010</b>	An explosion sinks the South Korean warship Cheonan, killing forty-six sailors. North Korea later denies allegations of responsibility.
<b>November 23, 2010</b>	North and South Korean militaries exchange fire across the border.
<b>February 12, 2013</b>	North Korea conducts a third and more powerful underground nuclear test.

# Teacher's Guide



## North Korea and the International Community

### Objectives:

**Students will:** Work cooperatively in groups to explore the perspectives of the members of the six-party talks.

Assume the role of delegates at an international summit and articulate the interests and concerns of their assigned country.

Consider how the varied perspectives of the six parties create both tension and room for collaboration.

### Note to Teachers:

For more information about nuclear weapons, see the Choices curriculum *The Challenge of Nuclear Weapons*. The web resources *Scholars Online—Nuclear Weapons* bring university scholars into the classroom with a library of short, free videos. <[www.choices.edu/nukematerials](http://www.choices.edu/nukematerials)>

### Handouts:

“Six-Party Talks: Member Profiles” (page 17-18)

“Six Parties in Focus” (page 19)

“Six Party Web Resources” (optional) (page 20)

### In the Classroom:

**1. Assessing the Situation in North Korea**—Have students recall the readings and consider the role of North Korea on the world stage. What is the current state of North Korea’s leadership and nuclear weapons program? What are the six-party talks? How has the international community responded to recent developments in the country? What have students heard about North Korea in the news?

**2. Exploring a Perspective**—Divide students into six groups and distribute “Six-Party Talks: Member Profiles” Assign each group a country to investigate. Tell students that they will each be responsible for presenting their country’s interests and concerns as a delegate at an international summit. Have groups read their assigned profile and work together to record their country’s perspective in “Six Parties in Focus.” You may encourage students to draw information from the required readings as well.

### Note:

Although the profiles provided may be used as a guide, students may find it helpful to do additional research in order to better understand the positions of their assigned countries. The list of resources provided in “Six Party Web Resources” is a good starting point for

additional information about North Korea and the perspectives of members of the six-party talks. You may wish to assign students to groups a day or two in advance of this lesson and instruct students to do additional research as homework.

**3. Articulating Interests**—Create summits by grouping together one delegate from each of the six countries. Advise students to articulate briefly their country's perspective to the other delegates in their summit. Instruct students to fill out “Six Parties in Focus” as each delegate presents. Additionally, you may wish to pose a question or present a hypothetical situation for students to deliberate within the summit, for example, *“Should strict sanctions be imposed on North Korea to convince it to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs?”*

**4. Debriefing the Summits**—Regroup as a class to discuss the summits. You may wish to review “Six Parties in Focus” to make sure students have recorded accurately the key information about each country. Do students notice any common ground among the parties? Where do students see room for cooperation among the parties? What are some potential stumbling blocks to agreement? How do historical relationships, economic interests, and security concerns complicate the present debate about North Korea's nuclear weapons program?

## Six-Party Talks: Member Profiles

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*Instructions:* Your group will investigate the interests and concerns of one of the members of the six-party talks. Read your country's profile with your group. Work together to fill out your country's information in the "Six Parties in Focus" chart. Keep in mind that each group member will be responsible for communicating your assigned country's perspective as a delegate at an international summit.

### North Korea

Though poverty and economic hardship pervade North Korea, its leaders cling to the principle of self-reliance and continue to isolate their country from the international community in many ways. Historically, China and the Soviet Union were North Korea's strongest allies. Today, China is North Korea's chief trading partner and ally and has mediated discussions between North Korea and other countries. North Korean relations with the United States, South Korea, and Japan historically have been very tense and are currently exacerbated by concerns about nuclear weapons. Though Russia has also spoken out against North Korea's nuclear weapons program, it has generally been hesitant to take a firm stance toward its neighbor. North Korea announced in April 2009 that it was quitting the six-party talks because they sought only to "disarm and incapacitate" the country. North Korea currently seeks one-on-one talks and a nonaggression pledge from the United States, a country with a strong military presence in South Korea. North Korea is also intent on obtaining unrestricted aid (aid that is not contingent upon North Korean disarmament) from members of the six-party talks.

### United States

The United States' involvement in the Korean War and its staunch support of South Korea have established hostile U.S.-North Korean relations. The United States currently stations 28,500 troops in South Korea to demonstrate its commitment to South Korean security. Although the United States removed North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2008, it remains concerned about North Korean belligerence and worried that the North Koreans might sell nuclear technology to other untrustworthy countries or terrorist

groups. The U.S. government has condemned all acts of North Korean military aggression towards its southern neighbors and denounced all public showcases of its nuclear capabilities. The United States has routinely promoted stringent sanctions against North Korea. It feels strongly that North Korea should allow IAEA inspectors into its facilities. The United States has suggested that it would be willing to participate in one-on-one talks between the United States and North Korea only if North Korea returns to the six-party negotiations. The United States is a nuclear power and seeks a permanent end to North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

### South Korea

A tense relationship between the North and South has plagued relations on the Korean Peninsula for decades. Though South Korea's "sunshine policy" soothed hostility between the two countries, the most recent South Korean administration's firmer stance towards its northern neighbor has heightened tensions between the two countries, and the November 2010 border skirmish indicates an ongoing hostility between the North and the South. South Korea's primary objectives are the denuclearization and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. South Korea is wary of forcing drastic changes in North Korean leadership or implementing harsh sanctions that could cause refugees to spill across its border. Many members of the international community respect South Korea for its thriving economy and successful democratic government. South Korea is not a nuclear power, but it receives strong military and security support from the United States and falls under the United States' protective "nuclear umbrella." In 2004, South Korea admitted that some of its scientists had been working towards producing



materials needed for nuclear weapons, and there is an ongoing debate within the country about pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

## China

China has long been a historical ally of North Korea, offering support during the Korean War. China currently provides North Korea with the majority of its energy and food aid, and is also North Korea's largest trading partner. China has benefited from this economic relationship and many of its companies are increasing their investment in North Korea. China considers North Korea to be a buffer zone between its territory and a U.S.-supported South Korea. China has shied away from taking harsh action towards North Korea, and while it voted in favor of the UN sanctions imposed in 2009, it has stressed diplomatic alternatives. It does not want to topple the North Korean regime or provoke any other drastic changes in North Korea that would trigger a surge of refugees into its territory and destabilize the region. China played a pivotal role in ushering North Korea to the six-party talks in 2003 and has been advocating for a return to six-party negotiations in order to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula. China has served as a mediator between North Korea and the United States, and many experts believe that China's leverage over North Korea has boosted its power and standing in the international community. China is a nuclear power, and has been ambiguous about whether it would support North Korea in the case of a military conflict.

## Russia

Historically there was a strong alliance between the Soviet Union and North Korea. North Korea benefitted from Soviet aid and military support during the Korean War and the Cold War. Though ties are not as strong since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has an interest in a cooperative relationship with North Korea and is often referred to as a

North Korean ally. Russia has economic interests in the Korean Peninsula, and is seeking to transport natural gas through North Korea to be sold in South Korea. While Russia voted in favor of the UN sanctions on North Korea in 2009, it remains insistent that any sanctions policy not target the North Korean people and that sanctions be immediately lifted once North Korea cooperates with demands for nuclear nonproliferation. Like South Korea and China, Russia is concerned about a potential refugee crisis due to any sudden change in North Korean leadership or the imposition of stringent sanctions. Due to its geographic proximity to North Korea, Russia wants to avoid escalating tensions or any outbreak of conflict in the region. Russia has long criticized North Korea's nuclear weapons program and advocated for diplomatic solutions to the issue. Russia is a nuclear power.

## Japan

The legacy of Japan's oppressive occupation of the Korean Peninsula during the first half of the twentieth century continues to embitter relations between Japan and North Korea. In the 1970s and 1980s, North Korea abducted several Japanese citizens and held them for decades to train North Korean spies. This controversy, among others, further complicates the relationship between the two countries and dampens the potential for cooperation. North Korea's ongoing efforts to expand the range of its missiles have incited Japanese fear of a nuclear attack and invigorated the debate on whether Japan should strengthen its military or even initiate a nuclear weapons program. The possibility of a Japanese nuclear program has sparked concern internationally as this could inspire a regional nuclear arms race. Japan has pushed for strong sanctions against North Korea to discourage its nuclear weapons program. After North Korea's border clash with South Korea in 2010, Japan appears hesitant to resume diplomatic discussions with North Korea.

## Six Parties in Focus

*Instructions:* Fill out the chart below. Consider each country's historical and current relationships with the other members of the six-party talks, focusing particularly on relations with North Korea. Then record the primary concerns and objectives of each country regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

	Historical Relations	Current Relations	Top Concerns and Objectives
North Korea			
United States			
South Korea			
China			
Russia			
Japan			



## Six Party Web Resources

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### General Information on the Six-Party Talks and Nuclear Weapons

*The Six-Party Talks on North Korea's Nuclear  
Weapons Program*

Council on Foreign Relations

<[http://www.cfr.org/publication/13593/  
sixparty\\_talks\\_on\\_north\\_koreas\\_nuclear\\_  
program.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublicatio  
n%2Fby\\_type%2Fbackgrounder](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13593/sixparty_talks_on_north_koreas_nuclear_program.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fby_type%2Fbackgrounder)>

*Country Profiles*

The Nuclear Threat Initiative

<<http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/>>

*Delegates' Statements*

2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the  
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear  
Weapons (NPT)

<[http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/  
Nuclear/NPT2010Prepcom/PrepCom2009/  
statements.html](http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT2010Prepcom/PrepCom2009/statements.html)>

*Country profile: North Korea*

BBC

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/coun-  
try\\_profiles/1131421.stm#media](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1131421.stm#media)>

*North Korea*

The New York Times

<[http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/interna-  
tional/countriesandterritories/northkorea/  
index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/northkorea/index.html)>

Al Jazeera

<<http://english.aljazeera.net/>>

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

<<http://www.thebulletin.org/>>

Council on Foreign Relations

<<http://www.cfr.org/>>

### Six-Party Member News Sources

Korean Central News Agency

North Korea

<<http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>>

JoongAng Ilbo

South Korea

<<http://joongangdaily.joins.com/>>

People's Daily

China

<<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/>>

Pravda

Russia

<<http://english.pravda.ru/>>

The Daily Yomiuri

Japan

<<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/>>

USA Today

United States

<<http://www.usatoday.com/>>

## Four Options for U.S. Policy Towards North Korea

### Objectives:

**Students will:** Analyze the issues that frame the current debate on U.S. policy towards North Korea.

Work cooperatively within groups to create political posters or cartoons.

Articulate arguments for and against their assigned options.

Explore, debate, and evaluate multiple perspectives on U.S. policy.

### Note to Teachers:

You might want to supply poster board and colored markers for this activity.

### Handouts:

Options 1-4, one option per group (pages 22-25)

“Understanding Your Option” (page 26)

“Focusing Your Thoughts” (page 27)

“Your Option Five” (page 28)

### In the Classroom:

**1. Focus Question**—Put the question “How should the United States respond to North Korea?” on the board or on an overhead. Have students recall what they learned from the readings. What is the history of U.S. relations with North Korea? Why do students think North Korea is pursuing a nuclear weapons program?

**2. Groupwork**—Divide students into four groups. Distribute the options, giving each group a different option but each group member his or her own copy. Also distribute “Understanding Your Option” to each group.

Tell students to read carefully their assigned option and answer the questions on the worksheet with their group members. Tell groups that they will be presenting their cartoons or posters to the class, as well as giving short presentations about their assigned op-

tions. These presentations should be no more than 3-5 minutes long. Remind students that they should incorporate the information from the readings into their work. (As an alternative, you might want to have students read the options for homework the night before.)

**3. Considering the Options**—Have each group present its political cartoon or poster to the class. Ask group members to succinctly summarize the perspective of their option, the three strongest arguments in support of their option, and the three strongest arguments against their option.

Once all the groups have presented, ask the class to consider the merits of each. Which arguments were most convincing? Did students find certain options more or less compelling than others? What U.S. interests are at stake in this issue?

In the current situation with North Korea, what is the difference between six-party talks and bilateral negotiations? How would leaders from the six-party countries respond to these options for U.S. policy? To what extent do the options address the concerns of Russia, Japan, China, South Korea, or North Korea? How would the different options affect U.S. relations with these countries? How would the options affect people in North Korea? People in other countries? How do they address the concerns of people in the United States?

How pressing is the issue of North Korea compared to other security priorities? How do other foreign policy concerns, for instance fighting terrorism, fit into the discussion about North Korea?

**4. Beyond the Options**—In a second class period or for homework, have students come up with their own suggestions for U.S. policy towards North Korea. Ask students to complete “Focusing Your Thoughts” and “Your Option Five” to help them consider their priorities and values for U.S. policy.

## Option 1: Launch a Preemptive Military Strike

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The security of the United States is in jeopardy as long as the current regime in North Korea is in power. This belligerent regime has a history of taking aggressive action on the Korean Peninsula and its nuclear initiatives pose a threat to the entire world. In order to eliminate the nuclear threat posed by North Korea, the United States must act quickly and decisively. A speedy, surgical attack on nuclear weapons sites will destroy North Korea's existing arsenal and its ability to make nuclear bombs, initiate the downfall of Kim Jong Un's regime, and send a clear message that the United States will not accept nuclear proliferation (the spread of nuclear weapons). North Korea has already declared that it has several nuclear weapons and has claimed to have tested three of them. Waiting will only give them time to develop more. North Korea could use these weapons against its neighbors, if not against the United States. Weapons-grade fissile material is also easy to transport, and North Korea could sell its nuclear materials to whomever it wants. If we give the North Koreans time, they can make the weapons-grade nuclear material that they need and hide it away from future international inspectors. Therefore, we will never be able to remove North Korea from the list of countries possessing nuclear weapons. This uncertainty could compel Japan or Taiwan to develop their own nuclear weapons program as a deterrent. Nuclear proliferation in Asia could, in turn, set off an arms race that could go worldwide. The United States must act now to prevent this possibility. The only option for peace and security in the future is to take military action now.

### Goals of Option 1

- Eliminate North Korea's nuclear capability by destroying its arsenal as well as the reactors and processors that are producing weapons-grade plutonium and uranium.
- Communicate to other states that nuclear proliferation is unacceptable.

### U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- Use the U.S. military to destroy North Korea's nuclear weapons production facilities.
- Prepare to respond to any North Korean attacks or actions to transport weapons or materials.

### Underlying Beliefs of Option 1

- North Korea wants to be a nuclear state and intends on using nuclear weapons or selling its materials and technology to other countries or terrorists.
- The molasses-like speed with which the international community deals with problems such as these will allow the problem to escalate.
- The policy of containing North Korea and its nuclear ambitions has failed.

### Arguments Against Option 1

- A preemptive unilateral attack on North Korea would violate international law. Additionally, the U.S. mission in Iraq proved that using military force for regime change abroad can be incredibly risky and costly.
- To bypass negotiation in favor of plans for military action will only increase North Korea's determination to build a nuclear capability as quickly as possible as a deterrent.
- In response to a military strike North Korea could launch strikes of its own against Japan, China, or South Korea, or U.S. bases in those countries. It might also retaliate with a nuclear attack.
- The radiation released from attacks against nuclear weapons facilities could kill thousands and be deadly for years to come.
- U.S. allies in the region are opposed to military action against North Korea.

## Option 2: Convince North Korea to Return to the Six-Party Talks

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North Korea's nuclear tests are part of an attempt to gain international leverage with the United States. North Korea wants more promises of economic aid and more international prestige, and it believes that it can achieve these things by bullying the United States. North Korea's long-range missiles and its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction are of the utmost concern. But if the United States submits to one-on-one negotiations with North Korea, Kim Jong Un will take advantage of what he perceives to be weakness, and he will only be back later asking for more. The United States must stand by its policy of negotiating with North Korea only in the company of Russia, South Korea, China, and Japan. In addition, the international community should not provide anything that North Korea wants unless there is evidence that North Korea has begun not only to dismantle but irreversibly destroy its nuclear weapons program. The burden should be on North Korea to change its policies first. The United States should use economic pressure to force North Korea to return to the six-party negotiations. Although countries in the region are afraid of a refugee crisis, the international community must be willing to pressure North Korea to return to the negotiating table. The alternative could be an international catastrophe.

### Goals of Option 2

- Contain the threat from North Korea and eliminate its weapons of mass destruction.
- Protect U.S. interests in the region and deter North Korean aggression.

### U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- Engage with North Korea only as part of multi-party talks. Do not reward North Korea's threatening behavior with direct negotiation or with aid.
- Make it very clear that the United States will counter with force—alone or with others—any aggressive actions on the part of North Korea.

### Underlying Beliefs of Option 2

- North Korea wants nuclear weapons to use as a bargaining chip with the international community, in order to get additional economic aid.
- Aid from the international community has only served to prop up a repressive North Korean regime.
- Kim Jong Un is a dangerous dictator, but he is not irrational. He will not use weapons of mass destruction if he faces the risk of complete annihilation.

### Arguments Against Option 2

- Unless the United States destroys North Korea's weapons facilities, North Korea will continue to build nuclear weapons. Nothing short of a military attack can guarantee U.S. security.
- Pitting five countries against North Korea will not address the underlying problem: North Korea believes that its national security is threatened by the United States. Only bilateral negotiations with the United States will address this fear.
- While the United States waits for North Korea to come back to the table, North Korea's weapons could find their way into the hands of terrorists or other states willing to use them. The United States and its allies could eventually become targets of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction.
- The U.S. presence in the Koreas is unwelcome. Continuing to meddle in the affairs of the region will only subject the United States to further danger.

## Option 3: Engage North Korea in Bilateral Negotiations

Nuclear weapons in the hands of North Korea are of deep concern. The United States will not be able to address the threat this poses unless it engages directly with the North Koreans and relieves North Korean security fears by making some concessions. Six-party negotiations have proven ineffective. North Korea sees these negotiations as coercive, requiring them to make concessions while getting little in return. It is time to respond to North Korea in a manner that acknowledges North Korean security concerns. North Korea has long feared U.S. aggression and it is for this reason that they have demanded direct negotiations with the United States. Because of the deep distrust between the United States and North Korea, the two sides should take simultaneous steps, each making concessions of sufficient importance to the other in order to facilitate compromise. Initially, the United States should pledge that it will not attack North Korea or seek to undermine North Korea's government if North Korea agrees to shut down its plutonium program. Other concerns, such as a possible uranium enrichment program, can be dealt with through later compromises. These mutual concessions can be negotiated most effectively in a bilateral context.

### Goals of Option 3

- End the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles in North Korea.
- Repair U.S.-North Korean relations and engage North Korea in the community of nations in order to remove its motivation to possess weapons of mass destruction.

### U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- Engage with North Korea in bilateral negotiations designed to stop the North Korean nuclear program in exchange for normalization of U.S. political and economic relations with North Korea.
- Be prepared to provide energy and other forms of economic aid—and pressure others in the six-party talks to do the same—in exchange for an end to the North Korean nuclear program.

### Underlying Beliefs of Option 3

- North Korea does not want to engage in a suicidal war. It simply wants to get the world's attention, and receive the economic aid and the security assurances it needs.
- Negotiation and diplomacy, even when they require expensive compromises, are less costly in lives, resources, and political capital than war.
- Countries in the region will look favorably on the United States for alleviating the threat of nuclear war in Asia without resorting to aggression.

### Arguments Against Option 3

- Initiating bilateral talks will be submitting to nuclear blackmail and will weaken the United States in the eyes of the world.
- Peace and security on the Korean Peninsula are critical to maintaining stability throughout Asia. This is not just a threat to the United States but also to North Korea's neighbors. They should take responsibility too.
- If the United States initiates bilateral negotiations, small countries will learn that they can get what they want from the United States by using "provocations."
- While the United States negotiates, North Korea could sell its weaponry to terrorists.
- The U.S. troop presence in South Korea may be fueling North Korea's nuclear ambitions. The United States must limit, not increase, its involvement on the peninsula.

## Option 4: Withdraw from the Korean Peninsula

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The U.S. presence on the Korean Peninsula has not stopped North Korea from acquiring a nuclear capability. In fact, the U.S. presence may have fueled North Korea's desire to build nuclear weapons. The smartest thing that the United States can do at this point is get off of the Korean Peninsula. The 28,500 U.S. troops there are neither wanted nor necessary to protect the United States or its Asian allies. Meanwhile the U.S. troop presence is a drain on the U.S. economy. South Korea has its own army of over 600,000 active troops. The U.S. presence on the peninsula is no longer necessary as a military deterrent. It seems that the presence of U.S. troops only serves to increase anti-American sentiment. Why should the United States risk time, money, lives, and its reputation in the region when it only serves to make the United States a target? Pulling U.S. troops off of the peninsula will eliminate the burdens associated with maintaining a presence, reduce tensions in the region, and place the responsibility for maintaining security in the region squarely on neighboring countries. The United States should remove itself from the peninsula, lower its profile, and use its time, money, and efforts elsewhere.

### Goals of Option 4

- Eliminate what appears to be a growing pattern of manipulation and threat by the North Korean government.
- Lower the U.S. profile on the peninsula and in Asia in general.

### U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- Remove U.S. troops from the peninsula.
- Encourage China, Japan, and Russia to play a more significant role in Asian security.

### Underlying Beliefs of Option 4

- North Korea does not want to go to war with the United States. It just wants publicity, attention, and aid.
- The limited U.S. military presence in South Korea only heightens tension and makes North Korea more belligerent.
- The United States can effectively deter North Korea from afar.

### Arguments Against Option 4

- By withdrawing, the United States would allow North Korea to continue its nuclear program. This raises the potential of North Korean nuclear material for sale to the highest bidder—including the possibility that it will land in the hands of terrorists.
- By ending all aid to North Korea and refusing to discuss a new aid package, the already horrific humanitarian situation in North Korea could be greatly exacerbated, leading to increased starvation and poverty as well as more anti-American sentiment.
- Leaving North Korea's neighbors to fend for themselves may cause them to adopt their own nuclear weapons programs due to feelings of vulnerability.
- The United States must remain engaged around the world if it hopes to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and terror.
- Withdrawing from the peninsula could be perceived by other countries as a sign of U.S. weakness.



## Understanding Your Option

*Instructions:* With your group members you will be answering the questions below and creating a political cartoon or poster from the perspective of your assigned option. First, carefully read your option. Then, with your group members, follow the directions below. Make sure to incorporate the readings and your knowledge of Korean history and U.S.-Korean relations to strengthen your arguments.

When you are finished, your group will present the political cartoon or poster to the class and give a brief presentation about your assigned option. Your presentation should explain a) what your option is advocating for U.S. policy; b) the three strongest arguments in support of your option; and c) the three strongest arguments against your option. Make sure that all group members are involved in the presentation.

1. Name of your option:
2. In 1-2 sentences, explain what your option is advocating for U.S. policy towards North Korea.
3. As a group, create a political cartoon or poster that represents the position of your option. Your cartoon or poster should make a persuasive argument in favor of your option. It should also help explain your option to your classmates. You might want to use pictures or slogans to get your message across.
4. What do you think are the three strongest arguments in support of your option? To help you think about this question, consider explaining this option to your classmates. What three arguments do you think would be most likely to convince them that this option is the path the United States should follow?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
5. Now that you have made a case for your option, consider the weaknesses of the option. What do you think are the three strongest arguments against your option?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.



## Focusing Your Thoughts

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### Ranking the Options

Which of the options below do you prefer? Rank the options “1” to “4” with “1” being your first choice.

- \_\_\_ Option 1: Launch a Preemptive Military Strike
- \_\_\_ Option 2: Convince North Korea to Return to the Six-Party Talks
- \_\_\_ Option 3: Engage North Korea in Bilateral Negotiations
- \_\_\_ Option 4: Withdraw from the Korean Peninsula

### Beliefs

Rate each of the statements according to your personal beliefs:

1 = Strongly Support    2 = Support    3 = Oppose    4 = Strongly Oppose

- \_\_\_ The international community is capable of dealing with the threat posed by North Korea.
- \_\_\_ Offering economic aid to North Korea only props up a repressive regime and does nothing to deter North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.
- \_\_\_ North Korea wants to be a recognized nuclear weapons state.
- \_\_\_ North Korea is using its nuclear program as a tool to win concessions from the United States.
- \_\_\_ It is possible to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program through negotiation and compromise.
- \_\_\_ North Korea intends to use or sell its nuclear weapons.
- \_\_\_ Negotiation and diplomacy are less costly in lives, resources, and political capital than war.
- \_\_\_ The U.S. troop presence in South Korea is fueling North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.
- \_\_\_ Levying sanctions only increases suffering in North Korea without restricting North Korea’s government from pursuing its nuclear weapons.
- \_\_\_ The threat that North Korea poses is immediate and must be addressed right away.

### Creating Your Own Option

Your next assignment is to create an option that reflects your own beliefs and opinions. You may borrow heavily from one option, combine ideas from two or three options, or take a new approach altogether. There are, of course, no perfect solutions. And there is no right or wrong answer. Rather, you should strive to craft an option that is logical and persuasive.

Be careful of contradictions and keep in mind that policies should logically follow beliefs. If you believe, for instance, that offering economic aid does nothing to deter North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, you would not support the continuation of the six-party talks.

## Your Option Five

*Instructions:* In this exercise, you will offer your own recommendations for U.S. policy towards North Korea. Your responses to “Focusing Your Thoughts” should help you identify the guiding values of your proposal.

1. What should be the most important goals guiding U.S. policy towards North Korea?
2. What steps should the United States take in the coming weeks and months?
3. How would your option affect the lives of people in the United States? How would it affect the people of North Korea and South Korea?
4. What are the two strongest arguments opposing your option?
  - a.
  - b.
5. What are the two strongest arguments supporting your option?
  - a.
  - b.

## Web Resources

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### Video

*Field Trip to the DMZ*

Wide Angle

This nine-minute video is about North Korean teenagers living in South Korea and the challenges that they face. The episode aired in 2009.

<<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/field-trip-to-the-dmz/introduction/4529/>>

*A State of Mind*

Wide Angle

Linked on this site (about halfway down the page) are five short clips from this 2003 Wide Angle episode about life in North Korea.

<<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/wideangle/lessonplans/imwatching/index.html>>

*Crossing Heaven's Border*

Wide Angle

This 2009 Wide Angle episode (fifty-seven minutes) is about defectors from North Korea who cross the border into China. One of the supplemental videos—"A North Korean Defector Speaks"—is particularly good and is seven minutes long.

<<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/crossing-heavens-border/introduction/4990/>>

*Depth of Field*

Associated Press News

AP's David Guttenfelder talks about photographing life in North Korea.

<[http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/\\_international/depth\\_nkorea/index.html?SITE=AP](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_international/depth_nkorea/index.html?SITE=AP)>

*Highlights from North Korea: The Road Ahead*  
Center for Strategic International Studies

This short video highlights expert opinions on the recent discovery of a new, sophisticated nuclear facility in North Korea.

<[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BcY\\_y1YhZ8&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BcY_y1YhZ8&feature=related)>

### News Reports

*The North Korean Challenge*

New York Times

This interactive map details major events in the history of the North Korean nuclear program from 1993 to the present.

<[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/04/05/world/asia/20090405-korea-timeline.html?ref=nuclear\\_program](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/04/05/world/asia/20090405-korea-timeline.html?ref=nuclear_program)>

*Inside North Korea*

BBC News Special Report

This site has links to articles, slideshows, and background analysis, as well as video and audio resources on the topic.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11421928>>

*AP Interactive: Obama urges North Korea to pursue peace*

The interactive section entitled "The Myth" may be particularly helpful and interesting.

<<http://hosted.ap.org/interactives/2011/korea-as-crisis/>>

*Crisis Guide: The Korean Peninsula*

Council on Foreign Relations

This highly interactive resource provides information about North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, economy, and military, as well as information about the six-party countries and historical background.

<[http://www.cfr.org/publication/11954/crisis\\_guide.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/11954/crisis_guide.html)>

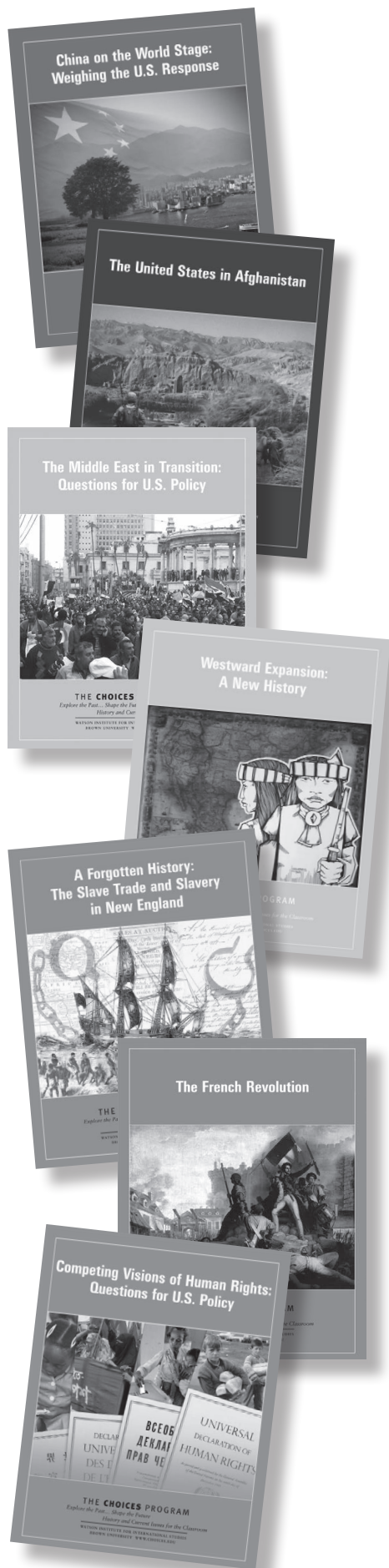
*North Korea*

Global Voices

This website reports on blogs, images, videos, and other forms of citizen media from around the world

<<http://globalvoicesonline.org/-/world/east-asia/north-korea/>>





# Engage Students in Real-World Issues

Choices' inquiry-based approach to real-world issues promotes the skills required by Common Core and state standards.

## Critical Thinking

Students examine historical context, analyze case studies, consider contrasting policy options, and explore the underlying values and interests that drive different perspectives.

## Textual Analysis

Students examine primary and secondary sources to assess multiple perspectives on complex international issues.

## Media and Digital Literacy

Students critique editorials, audio and video sources, maps, and other visuals to identify perspective and bias. Video clips help students gather and assess information from leading scholars.

## Communication

Students engage in collaborative discussions, build on each other's ideas, formulate persuasive arguments, and express their own viewpoints.

## Creativity and Innovation

Students express themselves by creating political cartoons, memorializing historical events artistically, and developing original policy options.

## Civic Literacy

Choices materials empower students with the skills and habits to actively engage with their communities and the world.

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## **Conflict on the Korean Peninsula: North Korea and the Nuclear Threat**

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In *Conflict on the Korean Peninsula: North Korea and the Nuclear Threat* students explore the history of the conflict between North and South Korea and the development of North Korea's nuclear program. With this historical understanding, students consider the issues surrounding the international response to the North Korean nuclear threat.

*Conflict on the Korean Peninsula: North Korea and the Nuclear Threat* is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

## **THE CHOICES PROGRAM**

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