

Korean Politics and Security

WE 553

WEDNESDAY 1330-1630
401-841-7509

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Course Description:

Despite the end of the Cold War, the Korean Peninsula has remained a legacy of that conflict and continues to be a concern for peace and stability in the region. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is one of the last surviving communist states with a faltering economy that struggles to feed its people. North Korea maintains a large conventional military force, hundreds of ballistic missiles, and in 2006 and 2009, tested nuclear weapons adding to an already serious security threat. Since 2008, North Korea analysts have been watching intently as the DPRK regime attempts to pass power once again from father to son. Across the demilitarized zone, South Korea has developed into a thriving global economy ranking 15th in the world. The Republic of Korea (ROK) is the 7th largest U.S. trade partner and a world leader in the production of semiconductors, automobiles, electronics, shipping vessels, and nuclear energy technology among others. Since 1953, the United States and South Korea have maintained a formal security alliance and today, the peninsula is home to 28,500 U.S. troops. Developments in Korea have an important impact in the region and the world making knowledge of the Koreans and their challenges vital for national security professionals. This course will explore the history, politics, economics, and security of North and South Korea and their role in the larger security context of East Asia.

Textbooks:

Uk Heo and Terence Roehrig, *South Korea since 1980* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
Andrei Lankov, *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* (McFarland, 2007).
Charles L. Pritchard and John H. Tilelli (Chairs), *U.S. Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula*,
Council on Foreign Relations, Independent Task Force Report No. 64, 2010.

Deliverables:

Three Analysis Papers

The written deliverable will be three short analytic papers, approximately 5-6 pages each. The questions are spaced evenly throughout the term and are due the week after the relevant material is covered. Each paper is graded on a pass-fail basis and will be returned the following class session. The paper is intended to be an analysis piece that uses material from our course reading list and discussion. Outside material may be considered but is not required. The paper has no precise format but the questions for that week need to be answered at some point in the paper.

Class Discussion

Class discussion is an important part of the course. Students are expected to have completed the readings before each session and come to class with critiques, comments, and questions.

Course Sessions:

1) Introduction and History of Korea [Nov 16]

Reading

South Korea since 1980, Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-50.

2) North Korea: Politics, Government, and the Economy [Nov 21]

Reading

Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Witness to Transformation: Refugee Insights into North Korea*, Chapter 1: "Introduction," (Washington DC: Peterson Institute, 2011), pp. 1-17.

Scott Snyder, "Kim Jong-il's Successor Dilemmas," *Washington Quarterly*, January 2010, pp. 35-46.

Andrei Lankov, *Essays from the DMZ*,

"Part 4: The Workers' Paradise? The Social Structure of the DPRK," pp. 66-76

"Part 10: Big Brother is Watching," pp. 170-189

"Part 11: How Does the System Work?," pp. 190-211

"Part 18: The Unnoticed Death of North Korean Stalinism," pp. 305-326

Nicholas Eberstadt, "What is Wrong with the North Korean Economy," *American Enterprise Institute*, July 1, 2011, available at <http://www.aei.org/article/103818>.

3) South Korea: Politics, Government, and the Economy [Nov 30]

Reading

South Korea since 1980, Chapters 3-5, pp. 51-128.

Haesook Chae, "South Korean Attitudes toward the ROK-U.S. Alliance: Group Analysis," *PS* (July 2010): 493-500.

Analysis Q #1 Due: Future of the North Korean Regime

4) South Korea Foreign & Defense Policy [Dec 7]

Reading

Heo and Roehrig, "South Korea and the Regional Powers," *South Korea since 1980*, Chapter 8, pp. 183-208.

Scott Snyder, "The China-South Korea-United States Security Triangle," Chapter 7 in *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009): 163-182.

Bruce Bennett, "The Korean Defense Reform 307 Plan," Issue Brief No. 8, April 19, 2011, Asan Institute of Policy Studies, available at <http://asaninst.org/eng>.

Kevin J. Cooney and Alex Scarbrough, "Japan and South Korea: Can These Two Nations Work Together?" *Asian Affairs*, (2008): 173-192.

5) US-ROK Alliance [Dec 14]

Reading

Heo and Roehrig, *South Korea since 1980*, Chapter 7, pp. 157-182.

McCain, Levin, Webb press release and letter.

Victor D. Cha and Katrin Katz, "South Korea in 2010: Navigating New Heights in the Alliance," *Asian Survey*, vol. 51, no. 1 (January/February 2011): 54-63

U.S. Senate, "Hearing to Receive Testimony on U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2012 and the Future Years Defense Program," April 12, 2011.

6) North Korea: Foreign and Defense Policy [Dec 19]

Reading:

Peter M. Beck, "North Korea in 2010: Provocations and Succession," *Asian Survey*, vol. 51, no. 1 (January/February 2011): 33-40.

Yong-Pyo Hong, "North Korea's Strategic Culture and Threat Perception: Implications for Regional Security Cooperation," *Korea Observer* (Spring 2011): 95-115.

Han S. Park, "Military-First (Songun) Politics: Implications for External Policies," in Kyung-Ae Park, *New Challenges of North Korean Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 89-109.

Dick Nanto & Mark Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," in Kim et. al. *The Survival of North Korea* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011): 116-136.

Analysis Q #2 Due: Assessment of the US-ROK Alliance

7) North Korea's Nuclear Weapons and Ballistic Missiles [Jan 4]

Reading

Jonathan Pollack: "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development: Implications for Future Policy," *Security Studies Center* (Spring 2010): 7-44.

Terence Roehrig, "North Korea's Nuclear Strategy and Doctrine," forthcoming in Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, *Nuclear Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).

Siegfried S. Hecker, "Lessons learned from the North Korean nuclear crises," *Daedulus* (Winter 2010): 44-56.

8) U.S. Policy and Korean Security [Jan 11]

Reading

U.S. Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula, Council on Foreign Relations, Independent Task Force Report No. 64, Charles L. Pritchard and John H. Tilelli (Chairs).

9) North-South Relations [Jan 18]

Reading

“Inter-Korean Relations and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” *South Korea since 1980*, Chapter 6, pp. 129-156.

ROK Ministry of National Defense, “Investigation Result of the Sinking of the ROKS Cheonan,” May 20, 2010, pp. 1-5.

Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, “Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: the Northeast Asian Response to North Korea’s Provocations,” *RUSI Journal*, vol 156, no. 2 (April/May 2011): 74-81

Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, “The Kaesong North-South Korean Industrial Complex,” *CRS Report*, March 17, 2011, pp. 1-21.

Lankov, “Part 17: Defectors,” pp. 286-304.

Analysis Q #3 Due: U.S. Policy for North Korea

10) Korean Peninsula: Future and Conclusions [Jan 25]

Reading

Lankov, “In Lieu of Conclusion: With a Bang, or with a Whimper?” pp. 327-330.

Robert D. Kaplan and Abraham M. Denmark, “The Long Goodbye: The Future North Korea,” *World Affairs* (May/June 2011): 7-21.

Christoph Bluth, “North Korea: How Will It End?” *Current History* (September 2010): 237-243.

Leon V. Sigal, “Can Washington and Seoul Try Dealing With Pyongyang for a Change?” *Arms Control Association*, November 2010.

Analysis Questions

Question #1- Future of the North Korean Regime [Due November 30]

Since the end of the Cold War, analysts have been predicting the collapse of the North Korean regime. These forecasts have been based on several factors including the loss of subsidized trade with the Soviet Union/Russia and China, failed economic policies, the problems of a communist economic system, a crumbling economic infrastructure, energy shortages, and bad weather.

Despite these many problems, the DPRK continues to plod along and defies the predictions of a North Korean implosion. Yet, one must also ask how long the country can continue on this path. In addition to these economic challenges, North Korea also faces another leadership transition as power is transferred from Kim Jong-il to his son, Kim Jong-un. Can the transition to the 28 year old son be sufficiently solidified before Kim Jong-il’s passing and will the transition be a smooth one? Much uncertainty clouds the future of these events.

What is your prediction for North Korea’s future over the next 5-10 years? Will North Korea be able to survive economically and politically? Will the power transition occur smoothly? What planning should the United States, South Korea, and others in the region be doing to prepare for whatever the future may hold in the North?

Question #2 – Assessments of the U.S.-ROK Alliance

[Due December 19]

The United States and South Korea have maintained a formal alliance since 1953 when they signed the Mutual Defense Treaty following the Korean War. U.S. officials believed they had done a poor job signaling U.S. determination to defend South Korea against the expansion of communism. At that time, the alliance was a patron-client relationship where Washington provided security for a poor and war-ravaged South Korea. Since that time, the alliance has evolved considerably as South Korea has grown into one of the world's top economies with an advanced, modern military. Over the years, the structure of the U.S.-ROK alliance has evolved as ROK military capability has increased, the command structures have been altered, and the United States has reduced the number of troops it stations on the peninsula. The alliance is again in the process of alteration with plans to relocate the bulk of U.S. forces in Korea to two hub locations around Camp Humphreys (Pyeongtaek)/Osan Air Base and Daegu/Chinhae and to transfer wartime operational control (OPCON) to South Korea. In addition to the military dimensions of the alliance, the relationship has also grown economically with the KORUS FTA, recently passed by the US Congress and awaiting ROK ratification, and politically as the bonds between the two countries have grown considerably during the terms of Presidents Lee and Obama.

How would you describe the strength of the U.S.-ROK alliance and how important is this relationship to the interests of both countries? Do you think the moves to restructure the alliance through the relocation of U.S. forces and the transfer of wartime OPCON are wise? Why or why not? How do you think the alliance will/should evolve in the next 5-10 years?

Question #3 – U.S. Policy for North Korea

[Due January 18]

In 2006 and 2009, North Korea conducted two nuclear weapon tests to join the ranks of nuclear weapon states. Though attempts to restart the Six Party Talks continue, it is becoming exceedingly unlikely that North Korea will be willing to give up its nuclear weapons capability. North Korea has indicated a desire to restart talks without preconditions but the remaining members of the negotiating group maintain that the goal of any dialogue is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, nuclear weapons are not the only part of Washington's policy on North Korea. The DPRK has an abysmal human rights record and is still dependent on international food aid for survival. Finally, provocations such as periodic ballistic missile tests, the sinking of the *Cheonan*, and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island are juxtaposed with occasional efforts by Pyongyang to improve relations with Washington.

Given these multiple factors, what would be the chief elements of your recommended policy for the United States for dealing with North Korea? Would you continue to impose sanctions? Would you recommend greater economic pressure or would you seek to engage North Korea to improve ties and discuss other concerns such as weapons proliferation and ballistic missiles? Based on your general policy direction, what would be the specific policy measures you might propose? In formulating this answer, be sure to consider any need to collaborate with others, especially allies in the region and the impact your policy recommendations would have on/be viewed by others in the region.