

**FORUM:** Security Council  
**ISSUE:** Reunification of Korea  
**AUTHORS:** Raaghav and Haroun  
**POSITION:** Chair, Secretary-General



*What is the UNSC and how does it work?*

The United Nations Security Council is an organ of the United Nations with “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security”. This includes the potential to establish international sanctions and peacekeeping operations, as well as authorise military action and investigate conflicts. It is the only UN body that can issue binding resolutions to other member states – in other words, you have to do what it says. Furthermore, it deals with the admittance of new UN member states and Secretary-General (UN leader candidacies). It is thus a very powerful body within the UN, and has been involved in serious international issues, including the Korean War, the Suez Canal Crisis and more recently the Rwandan Genocide.

The UNSC has 15 members, five of whom are permanent members: France, the UK, the USA, China and Russia (essentially the victors from WW2). These permanent members have veto powers; should they vote against a resolution, it automatically does not pass. Resolutions otherwise require a 2/3 majority to pass, or 10 votes in favour. The 10 non-permanent members are elected for two year terms on a regional basis; the African Group holds 3 seats, the Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Western European and Others groups, 2 seats, and the Eastern European group, 1 seat. The presidency of the UNSC rotates monthly.

UNSC non-permanent members in 2025 were Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia

More information can be found in the guidance documents available on the WESMUN website.

### *Background*

The division of the Korean Peninsula is a direct legacy of the tumultuous period surrounding the end of World War II. With Japan's surrender in 1945, the Korean Peninsula, previously under Japanese rule, found itself caught in the emerging tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. The seemingly temporary and hastily drawn dividing line at the 38th parallel, soon hardened into a physical and ideological barrier, separating the Soviet-influenced north from the US-backed south. This gave rise to two distinct states: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, embracing communism, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), or South Korea, adopting a capitalist democracy. The Korean War, erupting in 1950 with North Korea's invasion of the South, dramatically deepened this rift. This brutal conflict, concluded in 1953 with an armistice, not a formal peace treaty, leaving the two Koreas in a technical state of war and a catastrophic set of resulting relations.

### *Current situation*

The peninsula today presents a complex and precarious situation. North Korea stands as an isolated, authoritarian state, with power concentrated within the Kim dynasty. Its nuclear, chemical, biological, narcotics, hypersonic and ballistic weapons proliferation casts a long shadow over regional and global security. The regime's human rights record is deeply troubling, marked by reports of political repression, forced labor, and severe limitations on basic freedoms. Economically, North Korea struggles under a heavily centralized system, facing persistent shortages and economic hardship. South Korea, in stark contrast, has emerged as a dynamic economic force, a thriving democracy with a robust industrial sector and advanced technological capabilities. The ROK plays a significant role in regional stability, maintaining a strong defense posture and participating in international peacekeeping efforts. While South Korea has consistently sought avenues for engagement with the North, offering aid and proposing dialogue, progress has been limited. This picture is complicated by US support with some neutral parties arguing that the US military presence in the ROK only escalates any potential conflict – as opposed to remedying it.

### *Barriers to reunification*

The prospect of reunification faces formidable obstacles. The profound ideological differences between the two states, the ongoing military tensions fueled by North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and the stark economic disparities present immense challenges. Integrating a North Korea marked by human rights abuses into a unified nation raises complex ethical and practical considerations. The sheer scale of economic restructuring required in the North would place a considerable burden on the South. Perhaps most significantly, a genuine commitment to reunification from both sides, particularly from the North Korean leadership, remains elusive. The Kim regime's grip on power is its paramount concern, and reunification is perceived as a potential threat to its survival.

That being said, reunification remains a long-term goal of the North Korean regime and if carried out successfully, could eliminate long-term nuclear tensions with the United States, establish a militarily and economically strengthened Korea and settle one of the largest sociopolitical issues in contemporary history. One potential approach is a phased reunification, which would provide a gradual reintegration of North and South Korean societies and governments, whilst permitting time to negotiate, compromise and adjust where necessary, easing decades worth of cultural conflict and opposed attitudes. Such an approach remains risky however, with the primary criticism concerning the willingness of both governments to undergo such a prolonged process. As such, the UNSC is well poised to mediate a potential reunification proposition, with all members encouraged to participate and legislate on the problem itself.