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Introduction

Military tensions in the North-East Asia region, especially in the Koreas, Japan, China, Russia, and Taiwan, have been rising recently. Over time, countries increased their nuclear and military capabilities, threatening the surrounding nations. As a result, some countries are claiming that they are preparing for counterattacks to defend themselves from possible threats. In addition, other countries are considering acquiring nuclear weapons as a practical solution if the conflicts worsen. If military conflicts between countries continue, it causes the risks of exacerbating the situation, leading to nuclear war or armed conflict, which often leads to a devastating loss of civilian life, violation of human rights law, and large destruction of the environment.



map of regions in North-East Asia

Background

Recent military conflicts are based on the use of nuclear weapons, as it is the new and developed way to face a conflict. The countries in North-East Asia mentioned above can be categorized into different titles. China and Russia are states with nuclear weapons, North Korea is a self-declared nuclear-armed state, and Korea and Japan are two non-nuclear weapon nations that are under the United States' "nuclear umbrella." Having possession of nuclear weapons contributes to military conflicts since the ownership may bring about tension. In the past two decades, China has been building an ambitious and powerful military program that will potentially pressure the conflict between China and Taiwan. Taiwan was governed independently without any involvement from China, but China viewed them as a part of

their territory, trying to unite the island with the mainland. In response, Taiwan rebuked the efforts, but the consequence was increased political and military pressure from China on Taiwan.

North Korea is also constantly developing its military ability, reaching a new record of conducting over 70 ballistic missile tests in 2022. The North Korean Leader, Kim Jong-Un, also said in a speech that they will be continuously increasing the numbers and start producing tactical nuclear weapons. These actions taken by North Korea indirectly signal that they are preparing for military conflict and are alarming the surrounding countries. As a result, Japan and South Korea are taking defensive actions. Japan has already announced that they are preparing for counterstrike capabilities to protect itself from possible threats from China and North Korea. The president of South Korea is also considering obtaining nuclear weapons, and the public support for this idea is over 70 percent, according to some surveys. The attack from Russia on Ukraine once again startles Japan and South Korea to prepare and build their military powers before military conflicts or wars happen. This event also gives rise to the realization of their vulnerability being located in the region with countries with nuclear-armed states and high military capabilities.

Problems Raised

Rising Tension Between North and South Korea

Recent military conflicts are associated with the development of military abilities by increasing nuclear weapons. During the plenary session of the 8th Central Committee of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK), the leader of North Korea claimed that it was “necessary to make the year 2023 [. . .] a year of bringing about a change in making preparations to mobilize for war and enhancing the actual war capacity” of North's forces. The leader also mentioned their military ability to put all of South Korea under the range of tactical nuclear weapons. In response, the South Korean leader said that South Korea's forces “must surely retaliate against any enemy provocation with the determination to participate in war if need be.” In addition, North Korea updated its nuclear weapon doctrine, and the leader mentioned that the country as a nuclear weapon state has become irreversible and they will never declare denuclearization.



News broadcast in South Korea about the North Korean missile test

Cross-Strait Relation

China views Taiwan as a renegade province and aims to “unify” the island with the mainland. Since 1979, China has been putting in efforts for peaceful reunification in the form of “one country, two



systems. They have claimed that they aim for a peaceful reunification but do not promise to eliminate forces during the process. Beijing, the capital of China, responded to the situation by flying fighter jets (military aircraft that attack other aircraft) near the island. The Republic of China claims that Taiwan is a part of their country according to the 1992 Consensus. The United States also takes part in this conflict since they have been selling defensive military equipment to Taiwan, regardless of the warning to stop from China. As China is growing its military assertiveness, the conflict between the two countries may result in a violent force attack from China since they never mentioned not using force to achieve unity. Moreover, if China begins to take advantage of its military power and attacks Taiwan, The United States might provide support to Taiwan. This will then lead to an aggravated situation where there is a conflict between China and The United States. So, to prevent this from happening, the Chinese government has appealed for negotiations for cross-strait negotiation based on equality and the One-China Principle.

On the other side, the Taiwan government is committed to keeping a free and democratic system and states the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) should not be subordinate to each other. The government aims to maintain the cross-state status quo and will refer to the people's will and the ROC constitution. They hope that PRC will recognize ROC as an individual country with a strong belief in the democratic system.

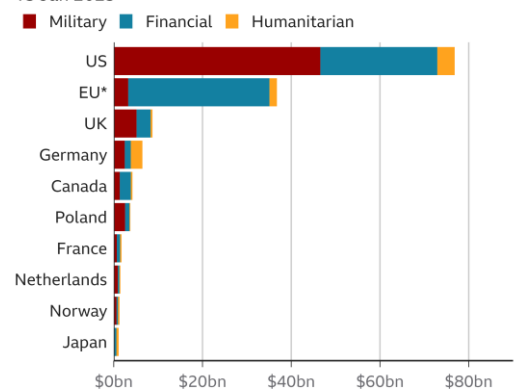
Key Players

Russia

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia is an example of a rising military conflict in Russia, which is a part of the North-East Region. Russia has gathered troops around the Ukraine border, starting a full-scale invasion. One reason for the invasion mentioned by the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, was that they still see Ukraine as a part of Russia. However, others view Ukraine as an independent country since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. A political expert, Brian Taylor, explained another reason why Putin invaded Ukraine. He said, "They were illegitimately and artificially separated when the Soviet Union collapsed, and he blames the West for trying to pull Ukraine out of Russia's natural friend ship."

Taylor believes that Ukraine is a separate country from Russia since the Soviet Union collapsed and thinks that Putin is blaming the West for trying to break the relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

US has committed the most aid to Ukraine
Commitments by the 10 biggest donors, 24 Jan 2022 to 15 Jan 2023



*EU institutions including the European Commission, Council, EPF and EIB
Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 21 Feb 2023

a graph of the biggest donors to Ukraine



Since February 2022, Russia has been attacking Ukraine, dominating different parts. As a result, Ukraine received much support financially, in military forces and humanitarian aid. The biggest donors to the country were the United States, the European Union institution, and the United Kingdom. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is still an ongoing situation, which needs many ways to resolve the military conflict.

Toda Peace Institute

Toda Peace Institute introduces itself as “an independent, nonpartisan institute committed to advancing a more just and peaceful world through policy-oriented peace research and practice.” The institute has organized --multiple workshops that aim to identify the obstacles to accomplishing peace in North-East Asia. The workshops deal with national identity issues and unpleasant histories that cause inharmonious relationships between countries. The institute also assembled conferences that bring together regional experts on peace and security in Northeast Asia, policy makers, and civil society organizations to identify the obstacles to peace and discuss how the dangers can be managed.



“Visioning the Future of South Korea – Japan Relations” workshop held by Toda Peace Institute

The Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD)

The Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) holds annual meetings that involve foreign ministry officials, defensive ministry officials, military officers, and academics from China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States. NECD was created to strengthen peace and security in North-East Asia and improve the mutual relationships between countries. They aim to reduce the risk of military conflict in the North-East Asia region and provide a foundation for an official multilateral process. During the meetings, the members candidly discuss the issues regarding the security and cooperation of the countries in the region.

Possible Solutions

Initiating Annual Conferences

In order to reduce the military conflicts in the North-East Asia region, the main point is to establish accordance between the countries. Although it is ideal to have a complete agreement, it is still



possible to find a pact where peace and security within the region can be pursued. Referring to the institute mentioned above, if countries engage in annual conferences that discuss the issues and aim to bring peace, the goal to reduce military conflict will be achieved. The most essential responsibility the countries should take is to all aim towards peace. Then, even when there are different ideas to achieve that goal, there can be a point for consensus.

United Nations Peacekeeping

Referring to the official website of the United Nations Peacekeeping, “UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.” They support countries previously engaged with combats in the process of “disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration”. With the help of this program provided by the United Nations, if countries succeed in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, then there are higher chances of a decline in military conflicts since countries will have a different approach to solving conflict rather than facing them with military forces.



over 200 UN peacekeepers traveling to help

Glossary

Nuclear Umbrella

Nuclear umbrella is a guarantee formed by alliances between states that a nuclear weapon state will defend the non-nuclear weapon state

Tactical Nuclear Weapon

A nuclear weapon that causes less impact than a nuclear weapon and targets a specific area rather than destructing a large area

Cross-Strait Relation

The relationship between China (People’s Republic of China) and Taiwan (Republic of China)

Demobilization

The action of releasing someone from an armed force, especially at the end of war

Reintegration

The action of combining or bringing back someone into society



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