

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the fourth Metro Detroit Model United Nations Conference. Over the past four years we have worked tirelessly to develop an exciting and innovative Model United Nations format that challenges our delegates in a competitive and inclusive environment. We work year-round to ensure that our staff members are as prepared as possible to ensure that all of our delegates can participate in our debates. Moreover, the topics that you will discuss have been carefully selected for their global importance and the larger questions that they ask. When reading through the following background guide, be sure to analyze and evaluate what larger questions are being provoked by the topic and what commentary these larger questions make about the current international system. Finally, if you have any questions, be sure to reach out to your chairs on the email address provided on their committee page.

We look forward to welcoming you in January,

**Mitchell Dennis**

Secretary General of the Metro Detroit Model United Nations IV

# The Arms Race in Asia

## History and Overview of Recent Military Tensions and Competitive Militarization

Asia is a sprawling continent that has always been home to many conflicting borders and overlapping claims from the beginning of human history to the present day. There are many complex relationships behind these conflicting border claims, with nations acting proactively and reactively in the pursuit of their best interests. With the stakes growing higher and higher with improvements in technology and more dangerous weaponry, these conditions set the stage for the competitive militarization known as an arms race. An arms race occurs when two countries, or competing alliances, who are rivals begin to modernize their military technology or increase the size of their military. Arms races often occur because the two countries view the intentions of the other country as potentially damaging to their own interests. Militaristic or aggressive political rhetoric often accompanies an arms race. Once an arms race has begun, such as that which developed between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War, it can be difficult to deescalate the arms race. Eventually, if not managed properly, an arms race can cause an outright military conflict. However, in many cases arms races between two powers can be managed by developing arms control agreements that allow a balance of power to develop in a region. If the balance of power is upset, by developing nuclear weapons, advanced missiles or militarization, in general, then arms races can be resumed.

As the region has begun to experience massive economic growth in the past 2 decades the crystalized order that had prevailed since the end of the Cold War has begun to be challenged. An economically rising China has sought to assert itself across the region, not only in the East and South China Seas, but also at its land borders. In response to these assertions, Japan, which has shied away from an offensive military, has begun to militarize in order to defend its perceived claim over islands in the East China Sea. Fear of Japanese militarism springs from a very different place than fears of Chinese militarism. Whereas both nations have a history of military expansion at the expense of countries in the region, Japan's aggressive enlargement (and oppressive rule) during World War II is more recent than China's militarism of previous centuries. Yet Japan and China are not alone in militarizing in East Asia, as North Korea maintains one of the world's largest armies. The North Koreans perceive American troops in South Korea as an existential threat. However, since the 1990s, North Korea has worked to obtain nuclear weapons.

Further afield, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have continued to improve and modernize their militaries in recent years. Turkey, which historically controlled much of the Middle East, as the Ottoman Empire, has taken aggressive moves to assert itself across the region, but involving itself in the Syrian Civil War as well as issuing rhetoric denouncing the Treaty of Lausanne which took away much of its former territory.<sup>1</sup> More dangerously, Saudi Arabia and Iran are two regional powers that view one another with suspicion. Saudi Arabia, which is Sunni, and Iran, which is Shia, view the other nation as an existential threat to itself. The two nations fight through proxy conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq where they have armed opposite sides in order to advance their own interests.

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<sup>1</sup> "Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire." *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/23/turkeys-religious-nationalists-want-ottoman-borders-iraq-erdogan/>.

However, the two nations continually seek out the most advanced military technology in order to protect against the perceived threat of the other country. This arms race of conventional weapons risked becoming a nuclear arms race if Iran had acquired nuclear weapons. It is important that the current arms race between the three countries is moderated while also preventing the development of a nuclear arms race that would threaten not only the whole region, but countries across Asia and the world.

Finally, thrown into this mix of tensions, is the bubbling cauldron of South Asia, where Pakistan and India have been locked in an arms race since their independence. This issue, which this committee will debate in Topic A, is of dire importance as both nations have nuclear weapons. Each time India or Pakistan improves its nuclear arsenal it causes the other country to do the same.

## Sovereignty Disputes in the South China Sea



### Dangerous Point of Contention

The South China Sea is considered one of the most dangerous areas in Asia. The sea, which is located between China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, and has many overlapping claims, is rich in resources and a vital shipping route.<sup>2</sup> With China becoming increasingly bold, the other nations have taken different approaches to rebuffing its advances. China claims an area known as the 9 dash line, which encompasses ocean area that is considered to belong to other nations. More recently China has gone beyond merely using aggressive rhetoric around the South China Sea issue, by beginning to militarize the area. In 2017 satellites found that China was constructing surface-to-air missiles on disputed islands.<sup>3</sup> These

aggressive actions force countries to improve their own militaries to defend their own claims. Vietnam and Singapore have begun to buy submarines in order to improve their navies.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, Vietnam is changing its navy from simply working to prevent naval attacks on its mainland to a navy that is capable of fighting far from the mainland, a major advancement that requires the devotion of a significant number of resources.<sup>5</sup> Vietnam has also sought out allies to balance against China's aggression, working to deepen ties with the United States (its former enemy) and India (a nation that is unfriendly towards China).<sup>6</sup>

### Philippines v. China (2016)

<sup>2</sup> "Why is the South China Sea contentious?" *BBC News*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>.

<sup>3</sup> "Beijing continuing 'steady pattern of militarization' in South China Sea." *Japan Times*. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/02/24/asia-pacific/beijing-continuing-steady-pattern-militarization-south-china-sea/#.Wh97ajdrzIU>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Modernization of the Vietnam People's navy: Grand Goals and Limited Options." *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*. <https://amti.csis.org/modernization-vietnam-navy/>.

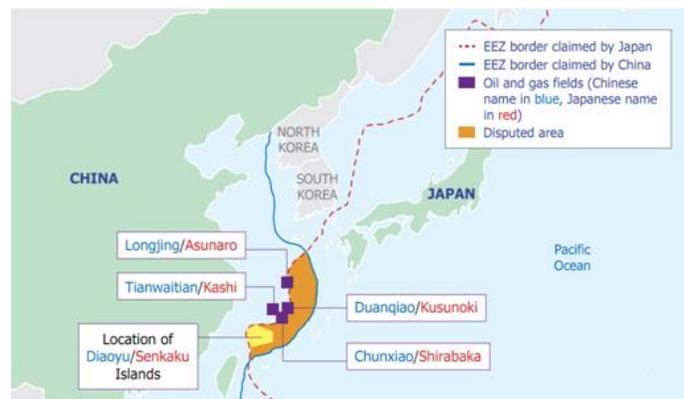
<sup>5</sup> "Vietnam's Quest for a Greenwater Navy." *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/vietnams-quest-for-a-greenwater-navy/>.

<sup>6</sup> "A shared enemy: India and Vietnam strengthen ties in the face of China." *ASEAN Today*. <https://www.aseantoday.com/2017/07/a-shared-enemy-india-and-vietnam-strengthen-ties-in-the-face-of-china/>.

While Vietnam has worked to improve its military and balance against China's aggression, The Philippines, has relied more on arbitration. The Philippines took China to the International Court of Arbitration in 2013 over China's claim in the South China Sea and its program that built islands in disputed territory in order to construct military outposts.<sup>7</sup> The Court ruled in the Philippines favor, finding that China had no claim to the region that they were claiming.<sup>8</sup> This ruling was hailed not only by the Philippines and other countries in the region such as Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia, but also nations wary of China's militarization, such as Japan and the United States. China, however, has rejected the ruling and continued its island building programs and militarization in the region. More recently, China has negotiated a framework with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but some believe that China is only negotiating the region as a delaying tactic to allow them to continue to militarize shoals and islands.<sup>9</sup> If the militarization of this vital shipping lane continues, it risks igniting an arms race in which countries will devote more and more resources to their militaries and increase the likelihood of a military conflict.

## Sovereignty Disputes in the East China Sea

The East China Sea, north of Taiwan between China and Japan, features fewer players but just as much tension. China, Japan, and Taiwan debate many points of contention here, the most well-known of which are the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Chinese and Japanese names, respectively). The Chinese stake their claim to the islands back to the 1400s, while Japan says that



there was no Chinese presence when they controlled the islands in the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> After the defeat of the Japanese in World War II, the United States controlled the Senkaku Islands until they gave them to Japan in 1972.<sup>11</sup> Not only are China and Japan interested in the islands for nationalistic reasons, but the area around the islands is rich in fish and natural gas.<sup>12</sup> The claims made by China and Japan delineate their exclusive economic zones (EEZ). A state's EEZ is a zone over which it has special rights to its natural resources. China and Japan reached an agreement to jointly develop the gas fields in 2008, but China has since returned to unilateral development, which has frightened policy makers in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Above all, both sides are seeking to assert their claims over the region for strategic military

<sup>7</sup> "South China Sea: Court rules in favor of Philippines over China." *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/12/asia/china-philippines-south-china-sea/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> "READ: Arbitral court's ruling on Philippines vs. China." *ABS News*. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/12/16/read-arbitral-courts-ruling-on-philippines-vs-china>.

<sup>9</sup> "ASEAN, China adopt framework for crafting code on South China Sea." *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asean-philippines-southchinasea/asean-china-adopt-framework-for-crafting-code-on-south-china-sea-idUSKBN1AM0AY>.

<sup>10</sup> "East China Sea : How an uninhabited island china spits Japan and China." *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/07/asia/east-china-sea-senkaku-diaoyu-islands-explainer/index.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "In the East China Sea, China Crosses a Line." *Stratfor*. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/east-china-sea-china-crosses-line>.

<sup>13</sup> "China and Japan agree on joint gas exploration of East China Sea." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/18/china.japan>.

reasons as vital trade routes run through the area. The dispute has caused Japan to revisit its commitment to pacifism, improving its military and seeking to create an offensive military, rather than their military which is currently only defensive in nature. Given the recent historical example of Japanese militarism gone awry, China, as well as South Korea, are incredibly fearful of a militaristic Japan.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, China and South Korea will seek to improve their own militaries in order to defend against the perceived threat of Japan.

## Nuclear Threats from North Korea

### Tests and Threats

North Korea has doggedly pursued a nuclear and advanced missile program over the past 20 years. In 2006 they successfully tested a nuclear weapon, but their nuclear program was not considered an effective threat until they developed a missile that was capable of carrying the bomb.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that they have 60 nuclear weapons and the ability to produce 6 more each year.<sup>16</sup> However, it is believed that they have not successfully tested a hydrogen bomb (or H-bomb), which is considerably more powerful than a nuclear bomb. In many ways, 2017 has been a watershed year for its nuclear program, as it demonstrated its missile technology was far more advanced than previously thought. In particular, in November of 2017, it tested a missile that is capable of striking all cities in the United States as well as all of Asia.<sup>17</sup> There are many proposed motives for North Korea developing nuclear weapons, but some believe they have sought the weapons in order to deter any attacks from the United States, South Korea and even China. It is widely believed that the regime is particularly fearful of an American engineered regime change similar to those conducted in Libya and Iraq. Nevertheless, North Korea's nuclear and missile ambitions represents a threat to its neighbors and forces countries throughout the region to begin to improve their own capabilities, and, potentially, develop their own nuclear programs.

### South Korean Retaliation/Defense

In response to the development of North Korea's nuclear program, South Korea has begun to improve its military technology. While South Korea hosts about 35,000 American military personnel, in addition to their own army of around 625,000 active duty personnel, they have begun to develop their own submarines capable of delivering ballistic missiles.<sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> Importantly, South Korea is trying to develop missiles that they can fire out of submarines from the water, rather than needing to surface in order to fire them.<sup>20</sup> More recently, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) is being

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<sup>14</sup> "Japan's Pursuit of More Military Power Will Reignite Disputes with China." *Forbes*.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphjennings/2017/10/30/japans-pursuit-of-more-military-power-will-reignite-disputes-with-china/#5a0ce6403c75>.

<sup>15</sup> "North Korea's nuclear weapons: Here is what we know." *Al Jazeera*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/north-korea-testing-nuclear-weapons-170504072226461.html>.

<sup>16</sup> "N Korea threatens missile attack on US territory Guam." *Al Jazeera*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/korea-threatens-missile-strike-territory-guam-170808230004855.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "New missile test shows North Korea capable of Hitting all of US mainland." *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/28/politics/north-korea-missile-launch/index.html>.

<sup>18</sup> "2017 South Korea Military Strength." *Global Firepower*. [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=south-korea](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=south-korea).

<sup>19</sup> "What is the US military's presence near North Korea." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/09/what-is-the-us-militarys-presence-in-south-east-asia>.

<sup>20</sup> "South Korea to Develop Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile." *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/south-korea-to-develop-submarine-launched-ballistic-missile/>.

deployed to South Korea. THAAD is an American missile defense system that is supposed to be capable of shooting down missiles.<sup>21</sup> Supposedly, THAAD is a response to North Korea's missile and nuclear program, but China believes it is an effort by the United States to tip the strategic balance of power in East Asia against China.<sup>22</sup>

## South Asian Dangers

Since the partition by the British, India and Pakistan have competed over territorial claims across their border. The focal point of this dispute is Kashmir and Jammu, the background of which is provided in Topic A. This dispute has erupted into open combat several times since 1945 and currently hosts a Peacekeeping mission. The dispute and occasional combat has made the relationship between India and Pakistan uneasy, making both sides suspicious to military advancements made by the other nation. What was once an arms race in conventional weapons, tanks, ships, number of soldiers, developed into a nuclear arms race in 1998, the year that both countries successfully tested nuclear weapons.<sup>23</sup>

### Nuclear Threat

Perhaps the arms race that is the most traditional example of an arms race. Neither India, nor Pakistan are signatories on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, so they do not have to abide by this international agreement that limits the spread of nuclear weapons. As of 2017, it is estimated that Pakistan has 140 nuclear warheads and that India has 130.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, while disarmament or arms control should be long-term goals, in the short-term it is crucial that active lines of communication are established and maintained between the governments of India and Pakistan. During the height of the Cold War the United States and the Soviet Union signed multiple arms control agreements that established monitoring of disarmament and helped slow the arms race. No current monitoring agreement exists on the Indian Subcontinent. Even more alarming, Pakistan has begun to develop tactical nuclear missile technology that would allow them to use its nuclear weapons tactically, rather than in an all-out conflict.

## Potential for an Arms Race in the Middle East

Unlike the other three sites of conflict, the Middle East is currently mired in several very real active wars. However, the three major powers of the region, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran are not currently fighting one another in an open conflict. While they are engaging in proxy wars to try and assert their authority, an open conflict has not developed between the three countries. However, all three countries have utilized aggressive rhetoric and engaged in the preliminary steps of an arms race. Luckily with the signature of the Iranian Nuclear agreement, the potential for a more dangerous arms race has been decreased, for the time being. However, the Iranian Nuclear agreement is under threat from domestic politics and rhetoric in the United States as well as potential violations by Iran.<sup>25</sup> If

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<sup>21</sup> "South Korea deploys final pieces to THAAD anti-missile system as US seeks tough North Korea sanctions." *Business Insider*. <http://www.businessinsider.com/thaad-deployed-south-korea-2017-9>.

<sup>22</sup> "China, South Korea end year-long diplomatic feud over missile system." *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/31/asia/china-south-korea-thaad/index.html>.

<sup>23</sup> "Understanding the Arms "Race" in South Asia." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/13/understanding-arms-race-in-south-asia-pub-49361>.

<sup>24</sup> "Nuclear Weapons: Who has What at a Glance." *Arms Control Association*. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>.

<sup>25</sup> "Iranian nuclear chief warns US: Don't Undermine nuclear deal." *Military Times*. <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2017/10/10/iranian-nuclear-chief-warns-us-dont-undermine-nuclear-deal/>.

Iran had secured nuclear weapons, it would have caused Saudi Arabia to develop them in order to maintain military parity with Iran. A nuclear arms race would develop in the Middle East, similar to the one that exists between India and Pakistan.

## Preventing Arms Races

While the best way to permanently prevent arms races in Asia is to solve the disputes that often provoke militarization, solving these disputes is often not possible and these disputes are not always the true cause of arms races. When a lasting solution to disputes cannot be found, it is imperative that arms races are managed. To do so, it might be prudent to establish arms control agreements and monitoring mechanisms that ensure that states are not improving their militaries so as to upset a delicate balance of power.

### **Domestic Motivations for Militarization**

In many cases, border disputes are stated by national leaders to be the impetus for the need to militarize, however, in some cases, pressures for militarization come from domestic sources. Especially in undemocratic nations, the military is a legitimizing force for national leaders that gives them the ability to remain in control. Therefore, it is important that leaders continually improve their militaries so as to maintain the military's support for their regime. In this scenario, an arms race can be ignited because one nation's military will improve their military, forcing nearby nations to enlarge their military as well. Additionally, in both democratic and non-democratic nations, domestic publics can be in favor of militaristic policies. This can force governments to stake unfounded claims to island chains or areas of land in order to placate the demands of their people and remain in power. Furthermore, smart leaders can also whip up nationalism in order to remain in power. Nationalistic slogans are politically attractive and a successful strategy to maintain their power. But this rhetoric can frighten nearby nations and force countries to become more aggressive in order to keep their promises to domestic audiences. It is important to view militarism across the continent as a multifaceted issue that has many causes that often go beyond the headline dominating sovereignty disputes.

### **Case to Consider: South Korean Sunshine Policy**

Although domestic audiences can be cause of militarism and arms races, they can also act as a break on these impulses. South Korea, despite sharing a border with the unpredictable North Korea since their partition in 1945, sought (at various times) a non-aggressive policy that tried to deescalate the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The most famous strategy it has used is the Sunshine Policy (1998-2008), an attempt to soften relations with their dangerous neighbor by being kind. The policy consisted of three broad principles: 1) No armed provocation by North Korea will be tolerated 2) South Korea will not attempt to absorb North Korea 3) South Korea actively seeks cooperation.<sup>26</sup> The Sunshine Policy was moderately successful, with tensions decreased and several joint economic projects that improved the standard of living for North Korean citizens. Nevertheless, as a long term solution it did not successfully deter North Korea from more militaristic advances. For example during the Sunshine Policy, North Korea successfully tested nuclear weapons in 2006.<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, while the policy enjoyed moderate success, it did not make any long-term progress. This case brings up the possibility of a non-military approach to conflict resolution, but also forces us to consider

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<sup>26</sup> "The Sunshine Policy of South Korea." *Stanford University*. <http://large.stanford.edu/courses/2017/ph241/min2/>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

whether such an approach can really be effective, or whether it is a more pleasant mask on a still uneasy standstill.

*Consider:*

- What methods can be used by those most directly threatened to negotiate with dangerous neighbors?
- What can keep them safe without provocation?
- Is having offense ready necessary for defense?

### Questions to Think About

- What are some domestic motivations for a state to militarize? International? How do the two affect each other?
- In each situation, who feels most confident in their claim now? What effects does that confidence have, for example on their willingness to negotiate and their actions in the disputed areas? What contributes to that confidence?
- What recourse is there for states that do not feel that confidence, besides militarization?
- Can these cases be considered arms races? Is seeing it that way extreme? Who would or would not see it that way?