

# **Russian Actions Affect U.S. Policy in North Korea and Northeast Asia**

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## **Key Judgements**

***Russia's actions regarding the North Korea (DPRK) nuclear situation negatively impact United States (U.S.) efforts, and are meant to bolster international standing in North Korea and surrounding areas.*** Russia's position as a nuclear power, permanent member of the UNSC, and a generally non-hostile neighbor of North Korea put them in a unique position to help de-escalate the North Korean nuclear crisis. While Russia could pressure the DPRK and aid U.S. regional policy, Moscow instead decreases the impact of sanctions, outwardly opposes U.S. military presence in the region, and uses their geopolitical position to assert power. Russia does this to undercut U.S. power and show their international strength and leadership. They accomplish this through sanction manipulation, a diplomacy only stance, and geopolitics. North Korea and their nuclear arsenal is an increasing threat to the U.S., and Russia's meddling behavior aggravates the threat.

- Russia purports to show solidarity at the United Nations by voting to pass U.S. proposed sanctions against North Korea on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), but uses sanctions manipulation to undermine efforts. Russia and China work together to ensure that various oil or trade embargos are watered down or not included in the UNSC sanctions.<sup>1</sup>
- Russian response to North Korea has been a 'diplomacy only' route, condemning potential military action.<sup>2</sup> This is based on Russia fears of an eastern military blockade similar to NATO's presence on their Western border, especially if U.S. military power is involved.<sup>3</sup>
- Russia's position on the border of North Korea and China offers them a unique role in Northeast Asia. Due to its shared border, Russia could step in and offer more support if China decided to either enforce harsher sanctions or back away from their relationship with North Korea.<sup>4</sup> This also means that Russia enjoys a unique situation as a direct generally non-hostile neighbor to North Korea.
- Russia wishes to maintain a position of power and influence, as a counter to the United States and its allies in the region.<sup>5</sup> Since 1991 Russia's diplomatic endeavors in Northeast Asia have created economic and trade opportunities and benefits, as well as relations with North Korea and other Asian nations.<sup>6</sup> Moscow hopes that their diplomatic standpoints in Northeast Asia will help maintain their global image of power and influence.

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<sup>1</sup> Albert, Eleanor. "What We Know About Sanctions in North Korea." September 26, 2017. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea>

<sup>2</sup> The Economist. "Stand With Japan. Why America must stand by its allies against North Korea." Sept. 2, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21727905-latest-missile-test-shows-containment-only-works-if-america-japan-and-south-korea-stick>

<sup>3</sup> Reuters Staff. "Putin Says Military Strike Against North Korea Not Sure To Succeed." October 4, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-putin-putin-says-military-strike-against-north-korea-not-sure-to-succeed-idUSKBN1C91PS>

<sup>4</sup> Ramani, Samuel. "Why is Putin Backing North Korea? To Build Up Russia as a Great Power." July 26, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm\\_term=.36a106a842a5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm_term=.36a106a842a5)

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Shkuropat, Anna V. "New Dynamics in Northeast Asia: The Russian Factor." August 2002. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2002\\_shkuropat.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2002_shkuropat.pdf)

## **Intro**

***Russia holds more cards than they care to admit when it comes to power in the Northeast Asian region and influence on international reactions to North Korea.*** However, the Kremlin has been less than helpful when it comes to U.S. policy regarding North Korea. For example, while President Putin has said that North Korea's nuclear program is creating threats to security in Northeast Asia, he continues to weaken U.S. proposed UNSC sanctions against North Korea simply to show Moscow will not cave to international pressure. Russia manipulates many U.S. policies to reach their own means in the region and internationally. This is based on the assumptions that Russia believes that they can manipulate U.S. foreign policy, and North Korean nuclear capabilities are viewed as a threat to Russia, but not so big a threat to deter them from seeking to impact U.S. policy in the region. (A caveat here is the assumption U.S. foreign policy in Northeast Asia is beneficial, which may not be the case.)

## **Background**

***The threat of a nuclear North Korea is becoming not only a regional issue, but a matter of international security.*** North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests since 2006, mostly directed towards the U.S. and its Northeast Asian allies. Throughout 2016 and 2017 there have been increasing hostilities and malignant rhetoric between the U.S. and North Korea.<sup>7</sup> During this time, Russia has called for diplomacy, working to broker talks between North and South Korea. Russia has been openly against any U.S. military buildup in the area, as it is a threat to their eastern border. In May 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with South Korea, criticizing the U.S. THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) Missile System deployed in South Korea. President Putin postured the presence of THAAD threatened Russia's security with North Korea.<sup>8</sup> Russia has helped pass sanctions against North Korea at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). UNSC Resolution 2371 (August 2017) imposed trade sanctions on North Korea, and UNSC Resolution 2375 (September 2017) sanctions for a cap on oil and calls for resumption of the Six-Party Talks. Although the sanctions were passed unanimously by the UNSC, Russia (and China) worked to water down harsher U.S. proposed sanctions before they passed - i.e. changing from a full oil embargo to simply a cap on oil. And while President Putin has said North Korea's nuclear program is creating threats to security in Northeast Asia, Moscow has done little to enforce those UNSC sanctions against North Korea, in part due to continuing sanctions on Russia from the U.S.<sup>9</sup> Further, Russia has economic interests tied to DPRK, which could be jeopardized by tougher stances towards Pyongyang.

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<sup>7</sup> The Economist. "Stand With Japan. Why America must stand by its allies against North Korea." Sept. 2, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21727905-latest-missile-test-shows-containment-only-works-if-america-japan-and-south-korea-stick>

<sup>8</sup> Ramani, Samuel. "Why is Putin Backing North Korea? To Build Up Russia as a Great Power." July 26, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm\\_term=.36a106a842a5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm_term=.36a106a842a5)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

## **Analysis**

### ***Russia uses manipulation and skirting of sanctions to limit U.S. influence in North Korea.***

This is based off the assumption that Russia does not support DPRK nuclear capabilities, but is more concerned about their security and economic status.

- Russia has voted to pass UNSC sanctions against North Korea which imposed trade restrictions, a cap on oil and calls for increasing democratic cooperation (UNSC Resolutions 2371 and 2375). Although UNSC sanctions were passed unanimously, Russia and China banded together during deliberations on every sanction the U.S. proposed against North Korea, and watered down harsher proposals in order to protect their (Russia and China) strategic interests. For example, changing a proposal from a full oil embargo (which would affect Russia's economy) to simply a cap on oil.<sup>10</sup>
- Russia is manipulating sanctions to retain inexpensive slave-like labor they receive from North Korea. There have been approximately 30,000-50,000 migrant workers sent from North Korea to Russia in recent years.<sup>11</sup> These workers are stationed throughout Russia working in home repair, logging camps, or construction sites. Often the living and working conditions are difficult, with suspected human rights violations. Regardless, North Koreans sign up and even bribe officials to go to Russia and work because of the monetary incentives - most of which goes directly to Pyongyang.<sup>12</sup> Russia benefits immensely from these workers and are loathe to pass sanctions against these workers, even if they could help the U.S. achieve their security objectives in North Korea if the value from the workers is compromised.
- Additionally, Russia may be trying to affect U.S. policy by failing to enforce sanctions on North Korea because of ongoing sanctions against Russia.<sup>13</sup> By manipulating U.S. goals and policy, Russia may hope to change their own sanctions. Through blocking meaningful sanctions on North Korea, Russia could push the U.S. to ease their sanctions on Russia.

### ***Regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, Russia strongly advocates for a 'diplomacy only' approach and condemns U.S. military in the region as it directly threatens Russian interests.***

One of the top U.S. priorities in the region is to aid in defending their allies, in this case South Korea and Japan. However, Russia may view continued U.S. military presence as a potential Eastern Blockade, like NATO in the West.<sup>14</sup> This is a threat to their interests, and thus Russia

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<sup>10</sup> Albert, Eleanor. "What We Know About Sanctions in North Korea." September 26, 2017. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea>

<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> Reuters Staff. "Putin Says Military Strike Against North Korea Not Sure To Succeed." October 4, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-russia-putin/putin-says-military-strike-against-north-korea-not-sure-to-succeed-idUSKBN1C91PS>

<sup>13</sup> Albert, Eleanor. "What We Know About Sanctions in North Korea." September 26, 2017. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea>

<sup>14</sup> Snyder, Scott A. "Russia and the North Korean Nuclear Challenge." September 14, 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/russia-and-north-korean-nuclear-challenge>

openly criticizes U.S. military involvement in Northeast Asia and calls on the U.S. and South Korea to restrain from their annual joint military exercises.<sup>15</sup>

- ***The U.S. has repeatedly stated all options are on the table (including diplomacy and military) when it comes to North Korea, which runs counter to Russian approaches.***

Russia has consistently argued against military action on the Korean peninsula or surrounding areas, especially where U.S. forces are involved. Working to prove instead that diplomatic methods are the only viable option.<sup>16</sup>

- ***Russia has condemned Japan's plans to upgrade its missile defenses.*** Japan has the right to upgrade their missile defenses after a DPRK missile test flew directly over their country, and the U.S. supports them.<sup>17</sup> However, Russia is opposed, going as far as disputing U.S. allegations that North Korea launched an intercontinental ballistic missile against Japan on July 4. Instead saying Pyongyang had launched an intermediate-range rocket.<sup>18</sup>
- ***Russia and China have created a 'Roadmap' to enable diplomatic talks between the U.S., its allies, and North Korea.*** The joint Chinese-Russian Roadmap was submitted to the UN in summer 2017, the U.S. has consistently said they would not sign, as it would require the U.S. and North Korea to refrain from weapons and defense buildup in the region.<sup>19</sup>

***Russia's unique geopolitical status as a generally non-hostile neighbor to North Korea is used to reinforce the image of a great power and a counter to the U.S. internationally.*** This is based off the assumption Russia cares about their international status and wants more influence in Northeast Asia. By usurping U.S. relations and diplomatic negotiations in Northeast Asia, Russia gains an opportunity to prove their strength.

- ***Russia seeks a role in diplomatic negotiations throughout the world (i.e. Syria, Libya) - posturing itself as a great power, succeeding where others may fail.*** They desire to have a role in order to refute Western perceptions that Russia is 'diplomatically isolated.'<sup>20</sup> In North Korea, Russia desires to prove it can solve problems the U.S. purportedly cannot.<sup>21</sup> President Putin visited DPRK leader Kim Jong-il in August 2001 and has maintained tentative ties since then.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. does not have the same diplomatic access, something

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<sup>15</sup> ibid

<sup>16</sup> Reuters Staff. "Putin Says Military Strike Against North Korea Not Sure To Succeed." October 4, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-russia-putin/putin-says-military-strike-against-north-korea-not-sure-to-succeed-idUSKBN1C91PS>

<sup>17</sup> Snyder, Scott A. "Russia and the North Korean Nuclear Challenge." September 14, 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/russia-and-north-korean-nuclear-challenge>

<sup>18</sup> Ramani, Samuel. "Why is Putin Backing North Korea? To Build Up Russia as a Great Power." July 26, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm\\_term=.36a106a842a5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm_term=.36a106a842a5)

<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> ibid

<sup>21</sup> Snyder, Scott A. "Russia and the North Korean Nuclear Challenge." September 14, 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/russia-and-north-korean-nuclear-challenge>

<sup>22</sup> Shkuropat, Anna V. "New Dynamics in Northeast Asia: The Russian Factor." August 2002. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2002\\_shkuropat.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2002_shkuropat.pdf)

Russia capitalizes on. Russian intentions and actions are not in the best interests of the United States. For example, in June 2017 the Kremlin released a statement criticizing Washington's handling of the North Korean nuclear crisis.<sup>23</sup>

- ***Additionally, Russia has invested in North Korea's infrastructure and has diplomatic ties with Pyongyang to strengthen their claim of domestic and international power.*** By weakening the stance of the U.S. in North Korea through continued diplomatic assaults, Russia is accomplishing part of their goal.

### **Context**

***Russia uses the North Korean crisis to manipulate not only U.S. policy in Northeast Asia, but also issues around the world Russia is interested in.*** The analysis shows Russia has strategic goals which are potentially at odds with U.S. strategic goals. Because Russia has already tried to improve their standing in the international community, as well as shown their hope a military presence by the U.S. will recede, Moscow is hoping to further their own goals by exerting their influence in Northeast Asia, specifically in North Korea. It is vital to note if U.S. (or Chinese) standing in the region is under question or strain, Russia will attempt to enhance its position accordingly. The U.S. wants to protect its allies in the region by any means possible (militarily, open to diplomatic means, etc.). Russia, however, does not see North Korea as a large threat to their interests, instead seeing U.S. policy in the region as something to manipulate to improve their standing in the international community. For the most part Russia has neglected to enforce sanctions and condemned U.S. actions. This analysis can help determine how and why Russia is affecting U.S. policy, which will help the U.S. determine what actions to take to further their regional and domestic security goals as tensions with North Korea's nuclear situation increases.

### **Conclusion**

***While the Kremlin isn't interested in seeing the conflict surrounding North Korea explode into war, it is willing to exploit every advantage at the expense of Washington.*** While Russia may be a player in this area, their motives are not necessarily the same as other regional actors. The North Korean nuclear crisis, additionally, is not simply an issue between Russia and the United States. In addition to regional risks (i.e. South Korea, Japan, and China who each have distinct motives and goals in the region), a nuclear North Korea poses international risks. Russia needs to refrain from marginally supporting and then devaluing or manipulating international agreements and sanctions vital to U.S. policy, or find a way to address the North Korean crisis without using it as a tool for their own gain.

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<sup>23</sup> Reuters Staff. "Putin Says Military Strike Against North Korea Not Sure To Succeed." October 4, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-russia-putin/putin-says-military-strike-against-north-korea-not-sure-to-succeed-idUSKBN1C91PS>

### Identify Customers

- U.S. Department of Defense as well as U.S. State Department will use this information to form national security policies and evaluate future diplomatic negotiations and what the role of the U.S. military should be in Korea.

### Identify Key Intelligence Questions

- How does Russia influence U.S. policy decisions by their actions regarding North Korea?
- Does Russia use North Korea as a tool to influence the U.S. in other areas besides North Korea?
- Do Russian actions impact how the U.S. conducts foreign policy in North Korea and surrounding areas?

### Starbursting

#### Context/Operating Environment

- Actors:
  - The United States, Russia, North Korea (DPRK), South Korea, Japan, China
- Factors:
  - Nuclear Proliferation, International Diplomacy, Influence from other nations, Stability, Asia

### STEEPPML

- The United States
  - Social: Protect U.S. Allies
  - Technological: N/A
  - Economic: N/A
  - Environment: N/A
  - Psychological: maintain influence in the region
  - Political: Allies, defense, security, nuclear threat
  - Military: nuclear threat, defense, THAAD
  - Legal: Just war - United Nations
- Russia:
  - Social: show Russian superiority
  - Technological: N/A
  - Economic: ties with North Korea
  - Environment: N/A
  - Psychological: Manipulation of U.S. policy to undermine their support
  - Political: Regional capabilities
  - Military: Don't want U.S. military there
  - Legal: N/A
- North Korea
  - Social: Has its own agenda
  - Technological: N/A
  - Economic: Sanctions enforced or created by U.S., not enforced by Russia
  - Environment: N/A
  - Psychological: trying to maintain status
  - Political: relations with Russia in a somewhat non-hostile manner, China as well. U.S. relations tense and not great
  - Military: Nuclear capabilities

- o Legal: N/A

### SAT

- Initial Question
  - o Do Russian actions impact U.S. foreign policy in North Korea?
- Rephrase
  - o How are U.S. foreign policy decisions in North Korea impacted by Russian actions in the region?
- Why and How Questions
  - o How would Russian actions impact U.S. policy?
  - o Why would Russia want to impact U.S. policy in the region?
  - o How is the U.S. reacting to Russian actions?
  - o How are regional actors implicated?
- Broaden Focus
  - o Russia has an international stake and uses the crisis in North Korea to influence U.S. decisionmaking in the region to better their security.
- Narrow Focus
  - o Is Russia acting certain ways to create conflict between North Korea and the U.S.?
- Redirect Focus
  - o Are China, South Korea, and Japan involved as well in influencing U.S. decision in North Korea?
- Turn 180 Degrees
  - o Do U.S. actions in North Korea affect Russian decisionmaking?

### Conceptualize Your Product

- AIMS
  - o Audience
    - U.S. National Security leadership (DoD, State, Intelligence). This is less strategic and more informative and evaluative.
  - o Intelligence
    - Examining the future of U.S. decisionmaking in North Korea regarding the influence that Russia exerts on them.
  - o Message
    - Bottom Line: Russian actions regarding North Korea influence U.S. decisionmaking processes in the region by affecting the impact of U.S. actions and beliefs
  - o Storyline
    - Russia could be acting like this anywhere, but North Korea is a viewed threat to the U.S. so they are acting to influence U.S. decisions in that region instead.

### Getting Started Checklist

1. What has prompted the need for the analysis?
  - a. North Korea is an increasing threat to the U.S. and any potential issues regarding policy implementation should be addressed.
2. What is the key intelligence, policy, or business question that needs to be addressed?
  - a. How is Russia influencing or manipulating U.S. policy decisions in DPRK?

3. Why is this issue important, and how can you make a unique and meaningful contribution?
  - a. North Korea is an increasing threat to U.S. security. If threats to U.S. policy can be determined, the U.S. can better plan for potential issues or find ways their policy could be undermined. By doing that it can be strengthened.
4. Has this question or a similar question been answered by you or someone else, and what was said? To whom was that analysis delivered, and what has changed since then?
  - a. Many people are examining how Russia interacts with North Korea and how the U.S. interacts with North Korea. However, not much detailed research can be found on exactly how or why Russia manipulates U.S. foreign policy in North Korea. There is research done by Brookings, Reuters, Council on Foreign Relations, CSIS, Foreign Affairs, etc. But not much I was able to find on a state level.
5. Who are the principal clients or customer sets? Are their needs well understood?
  - a. U.S. Department of Defense and State Department. Yes.
6. Are there any stakeholders who would have an interest in the answer? Would any of them prefer that a different question be answered?
  - a. Potentially Northeast Asian allies to the U.S. I would think that they would rather know how their security was affected by Japan instead of how U.S. policies were affected by Japan. Although that does somewhat fall under the same category of policy manipulation by outside forces?
7. How soon is an answer needed to the question?
  - a. As soon as possible
8. What are all the possible answers to the question? What alternative explanations or outcomes should be considered before making an analytic judgement on the issue?
  - a. While Russian manipulation could be directed towards certain things, it is also possible that Russia doesn't necessarily care about North Korea or U.S. policy. Given the evidence this is doubtful. But if it were true, I would need to reevaluate the analysis.
9. What structured analytic techniques would help us the most in generating our analysis?
  - a. Starbursting, Concept Map, STEEPPML
10. What potential sources or streams of information would be the most useful and efficient to exploit and learn more about this topic or question?
  - a. News media is good to know what is happening, but for reliable sources, Reuters, Brookings, think tanks of the nature, and state and government databases.
11. Where should we reach out for expertise, information, or assistance within our organization or outside our unit?
  - a. Intelligence Community
  - b. UN, Think Tanks (Nuclear)
12. Should we convene an initial brainstorming session to identify and challenge key assumptions, examine key information, identify key drivers and important players, explore alternative explanations, and generate alternative hypotheses?
  - a. Yes

#### Concept Map

- On separate page



### Identify Your Analytic Approach

- Key Intelligence Questions
  - How do Russia's actions in North Korea and Northeast Asia impact U.S. actions and policy?
  - Will the geopolitical structure be redefined with Russia's actions?
    - What are the implications for Russia's decisions (i.e. limited sanctions, lack of hard line approach to North Korea, etc.)

### Type of Analytic Argument

- Descriptive
  - Historical and recent relations between the U.S., Russia, and Northeast Asia
  - Nuclear threat to U.S.
  - UNSC actions and sanctions - supported as well as limited by Russia and China
  - Russia's goals
- Evaluative
  - Why and how would Russian actions impact U.S. policy in the region?
  - Are Russia's goals equivalent with U.S. national security?
    - Why or why not?

### Key Assumptions Check

- Assumptions
  - North Korean nuclear weapons are not supported by Russia
  - Russia wants more influence in North Korea/Northeast Asia
  - Russia may see a deteriorating relationship between North Korea and the U.S. as an opportunity to increase their own influence
  - Russia fears an eastern military blockade similar to NATO in the west
  - Russia wants to step into China's place if China is unwilling to enforce sanctions on North Korea
  - Russia believes diplomatic negotiations are the best way forward to protect their interests
- Check - on separate page
- Refined Key Assumptions List
  - Russia is a rational actor
  - Russia wants more influence in North Korea/Northeast Asia
  - Russia fears an eastern military blockade similar to NATO in the west
  - Russia believes diplomatic negotiations are the best way forward to protect their interests
  - North Korean nuclear weapons are not supported by Russia but that doesn't dissuade them from working with North Korea
  - Russia views a lack of U.S. and/or Chinese influence in the region as an opportunity to increase their own influence

### Generating Hypotheses

- Simple Hypotheses Generator
  - List out many details and create six possible hypotheses - separate page

### Test Hypotheses (ACH)

- On separate page

### Argumentation - Argument Mapping

- Separate Page

#### Challenge Judgement 1

- Premortem Analysis - on separate page

#### Challenge Judgements 2

- Structured Self-Critique - on separate page