

Why should Korea be reunified?



People for Successful COreanREunification

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1. On a global humanitarian scale: to stop human rights abuses in North Korea

“No food and no culture. No future and no past. Just an unbearable present...”

–Christopher Hitchens¹

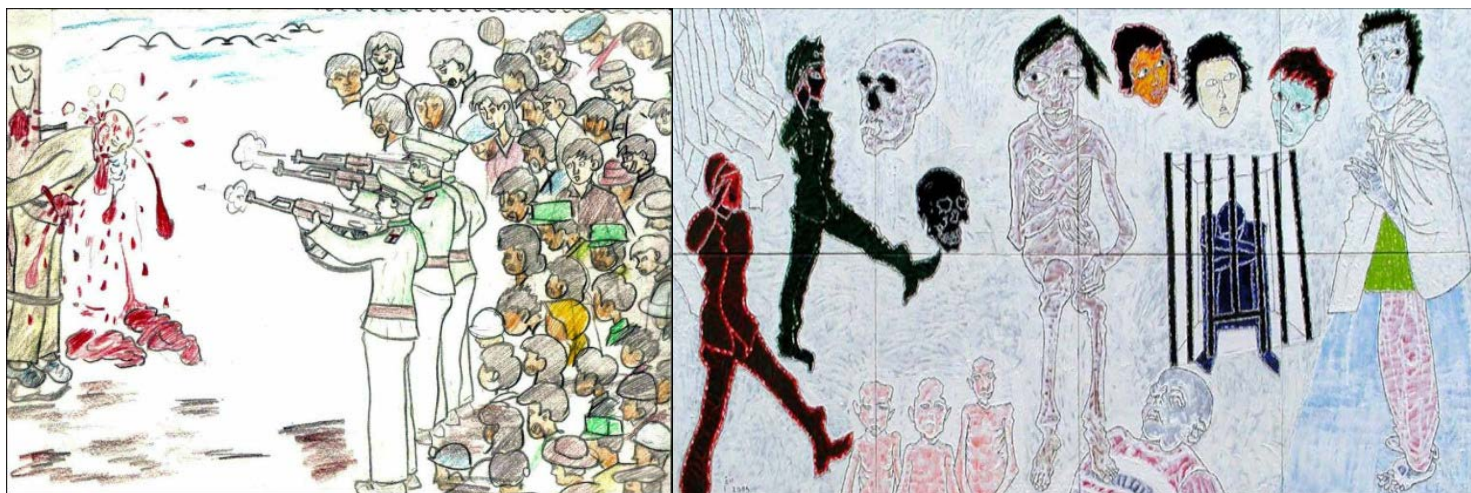


Abominable human rights abuses occur on a daily basis in North Korea. The North Korean human rights situation has been recognized as “one of the worst in the world” by the United Nations.² Amnesty International has also labeled North Korea as the “worst place to live”.³

i. Public Executions and Torture

North Koreans are not entitled to any basic rights under the government. They are denied freedom of speech, press, religion and movement.⁴ Crimes in North Korea are punishable by death or torture that is “worse than the way animals are slaughtered”.⁵

- [Two North Koreans publicly executed for reading South Korean propaganda](#)
- [Public Execution](#) (YouTube Video)



© North Korea Genocide Exhibit

¹ Hitchens, Christopher. “Worst of the Worst: Why North Korea is No.1” *Newsweek International*. 9 July 2001.

<http://www.nkmissions.com/10part_report/Articles/Worst%20of%20the%20Worst%20Why%20North%20Korea%20is%20No_%201.htm>

² <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/NorthKorea%20report%20official%2030.10.06.pdf>

³ Rendler, Jack. “North Korea: The Last Worst Place on Earth”. *Amnesty International*. 11 May 2011. <<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/iar/north-korea-the-last-worst-place-on-earth/>>

⁴ Amnesty International. “North Korea: Freedom

⁵ “Executions, Torture in North Korea ‘Worse Than Animal Slaughter’”. *Associated Press*. 29 October 2008.

<<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,444672,00.html>>



ii. Starvation and Food Shortage



In addition to the denial of freedom and basic liberties, North Korean citizens are subject to malnutrition and starvation because of an unequal distribution of food. According to the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2008, almost 30 percent of the population (6.5 million people) did not have enough food to eat.⁶

- North Koreans live in dire poverty and are malnourished because the government does not provide food or medical care.
- [Poverty in North Korea](#) (YouTube Video)

iii. Prison and Work Camps

North Koreans are sent to prison camps as political prisoners if they are seen to be “criticizing” the regime. In these prison camps, North Koreans are treated like slaves and subject to torture and hard labor. There are approximately 200,000 inmates currently in these prison camps.⁷

- [“Hell Holes”: North Korea’s Secret Prison Camps by Amnesty International](#) (YouTube Video)
- [Story of Shin DongHyuk, the only known survivor of a ‘total-control zone’ prison camp](#)

iv. North Korean Refugees in China

Many North Koreans flee to China in order to escape the repressive North Korean lifestyle, only to find that life in China is not much

better. North Korean refugees in China are placed in a “legal limbo” where they are not recognized as citizens and, as a result, cannot receive education or medical care.⁸ Women are often sold as sex slaves to Chinese men and children are left parentless. The refugees in China live in constant hiding and fear being sent back.

- [Congressional Research Service’s Report on North Korean Refugees in China](#)
- [“North Korean Defectors Give Grim Testimony of Experiences with China”](#) by Gary Feuerberg in *The Epoch Times*: North Korean women tell their stories of human trafficking and forced marriage

A unified Korean peninsula under a democratic government would enable the oppressed North Koreans to be free from the Kim Jong-Il dictatorship and human rights violations



⁶North Korea Now.<<http://www.northkoreanow.org/the-crisis/mass-starvations-in-north-korea/>>

⁷McDonald, Mark. “North Korean Prison Camps Massive and Growing”. *New York Times*. 4 May 2011.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/world/asia/05korea.html>>

⁸Yoon, Linda. “Stateless Children: North Korean Refugees in China”. *The Christian Science Monitor*. 4 September 2009.

<<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2009/0904/p08s01-wosc.html>>



2. On an international scale: to establish greater peace and stability

Tensions between the great powers remain high in East Asia as they seek ways to minimize confrontations between the two Koreas and keep the North's military provocations at bay. A unified Korea would promote greater peace and reduce the risks of increased nuclear weapons, proliferation and war.



i. Ease Tensions between Big Powers in East Asia

A secure and unified Korean peninsula can ease tensions that have been prevalent throughout history between the “big powers” – including Russia, China, Japan and the United States. If Korea is unified and more stable, it will no longer be an “object of contention” that other countries take advantage of. Currently, China is North Korea's biggest supporter – both economically and politically. If North Korea were to fall into China's hands, tensions between regional powers, namely China and the U.S., would increase and potentially lead to military confrontation.

A unified Korea will also restore stability and peace in the region as North Korea's unpredictable military acts come to an end.

ii. Reduction of Nuclear Weapons and Missile Threat

Kim Jong-Il uses North Korea's nuclear weapons as his trump card in order to receive foreign concessions. The threat of North Korea's nuclear weapons program has increased anxiety and tension between countries. Additionally, North Korea exports weapons to rogue states, including Libya and Iran, which could lead to arms proliferation and the possession of missiles in dangerous hands.⁹

- [North Korea may have developed a ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead](#)

Under a unified Korea, the threat of nuclear weapons and arms proliferation would be greatly reduced and promote greater peace in the region.



⁹ Ramstad, Evan. “Spotted: NK Arms in Libya”. *Korea Real Time*. 30 March 2011. <http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2011/03/30/spotted-nk-arms-in-libya/>



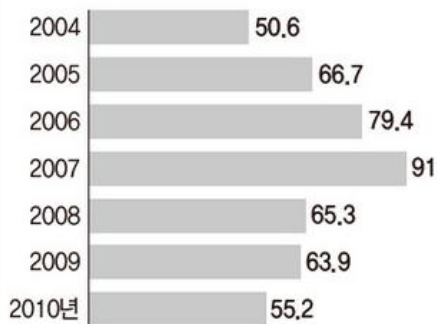
3. On a domestic scale: to strengthen Korea as a single nation

"United we stand, divided we fall."
-Aesop



Volume of South-North Korea trade in comparison to trade between NK and China

Total South-North Korean trade shown as a percentage of the total NK-China trade by year (%)



© [The HanKyoreh \(Min-Hee Park\)](#)

i. Access to Natural Resources

North Korea has underground mineral resources that are valuable to the world.

- North Korea has the world's largest source of magnesite (magnesium carbonate) –which is used for building light-weight automobile parts – at 4 to 5 million tons. The South Korean Ministry of Unification estimates that these resources are worth \$4.5 trillion.¹⁰
- As of now, China has more access to North Korea's natural resources than South Korea does.^{11,12}
- Korea could receive gas resources from Russia via pipelines through the north, which are much cheaper than shipping oil and gas.¹³

ii. Geographical Advantage

A reunified Korea could take greater advantage of its central geographical position as an intermediary base for trade, similar to that of Singapore. It could act as an entry point for China to the Pacific and a connecting point between Japan and the mainland (Asia), which would increase Korea's role in international trade and relations.

- In particular, access to seaports in the North (near the border between China and Russia) provide important points for transporting goods more efficiently.

iii. Reduction of Military Expenditures

Even now, North and South Korea are still at war and peace has only been maintained because of a cease-fire armistice signed in 1953. In addition to this war mindset, recent provocations from the North (Cheonan, YeongPyong Island) continue to prompt South Korea to spend large amounts of money on military expenditures for its defense.

- In 2010 South Korea's defense budget was estimated to be \$27.6 billion (2.9% of its GDP). It was

¹⁰ Kim Chan-Hee. *KukminIlbo*. <<http://news.kukinews.com/article/print.asp?arcid=0004815570>>

¹¹ Suh Kyoung-Ho. "South Losing Race for the North's Resources". *Korea JoongAng Daily*. 18 January 2011. <<http://joongangdaily.joins.com/article/view.asp?aid=2931111>>

¹²Institute for Far Eastern Studies (IFES). "Increase in DPRK's mineral resources exports to China expected again for this year". Via *North Korean Economy Watch*. 24 February 2011. <<http://www.nkeconwatch.com/2011/02/28/increase-in-dprk%E2%80%99s-mineral-resources-exports-to-china-expected-again-for-this-year/>>

¹³Byun Duk-kun. "Seoul's new envoy to Russia vows to speed up gas pipeline project". Yonhap News Agency. 10 February 2010. <<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/10/18/0401000000AEN20100210008600315E.HTML>>



The 15 countries with the highest military expenditure in 2010

Spending figures are in US\$, at current prices and exchange rates. Countries are ranked according to military spending at Market Exchange Rates (MER). Figures for military spending at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) exchange rates are also given for information.

Rank	Country	Spending MER (\$b.)	Change, 2001-2010 (%)	Share of GDP, (% est.) ^a	World share (%)	Spending PPP (\$b.) ^b
1	USA	698	81.3	4.8	43	698
2	China	[119]	189	[2.1]	[7.3]	[210]
3	UK	59.6	21.9	2.7	3.7	57.6
4	France	59.3	3.3	2.3	3.6	49.8
5	Russia	[58.7]	82.4	[4.0]	[3.6]	[88.2]
Sub-total top 5		995			61	
6	Japan	54.5	-1.7	1.0	3.3	43.6
7	Saudi Arabia ^c	45.2	63.0	10.4	2.8	64.6
8	Germany	[45.2]	-2.7	[1.3]	[2.8]	[40.0]
9	India	41.3	54.3	2.7	2.5	116
10	Italy	[37.0]	-5.8	[1.8]	[2.3]	[32.2]
Sub-total top 10		1 219			75	
11	Brazil	33.5	30	1.6	2.1	36.2
12	South Korea	27.6	45.2	2.8	1.7	40.8
13	Australia	24.0	48.9	2.0	1.5	17.3
14	Canada	[22.8]	51.8	[1.5]	[1.4]	[19.4]
15	Turkey	[17.5]	-12.2	[2.4]	[1.1]	[23.9]
Sub-total top 15		1 344			82	
World		1 630	50.3	2.6	100	

[] = estimated figure; GDP = gross domestic product.

^a The figures for national military expenditure as a share of GDP are for 2010, and are based on estimates for 2010 GDP from the IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2010.

^b The figures for military expenditure at PPP exchange rates are estimates based on the ratio of PPP to MER-based GDP projections for 2010 from the IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2010. Thus, military expenditure figures at MER rates have been multiplied by the same ratio to obtain the PPP estimates.

^c The figures for Saudi Arabia include expenditure for public order and safety and might be slight overestimates.

Sources: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <<http://www.sipri.org/databases/milex/>>; and International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook* database, October 2010, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2010/02/weodata/index.aspx>.

- In 2010, South Korea was the third largest importer of weapons in the world.¹⁴

Reunification would put an official end to the war between the two countries and reduce the financial burden of military expenditures spent on maintaining the current armistice



© AFP

¹⁴Jung Sung-Ki. "Korea Ranks 3rd in Arms Imports". *The Korea Times*. 16 March 2010. <http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/03/117_62485.html>



iv. Improvements to Korea's Financial Standing and Domestic Markets

Currently, the risk of war and regional instability has brought upon high interest rates for the South Korean government. A unified Korea, with no risk of war, would increase and encourage foreign investment. Korea can improve its international credit standing for bond issuance and other financial investments from abroad. Additionally, the population of South Korea is estimated to be 48, 754, 657 but its domestic market is considered small and easily influenced by fluctuations in foreign markets. As of now, exporting industries represent the South Korean domestic market. Thus, small and medium enterprises have business structures that are dependent on larger, exporting enterprises.^{15 16 17}

- In order for a nation to be self-sufficient by its domestic market, its economic scale must be supported by a population of 100,000,000. Reunification would increase the Korean population and create a larger pool of cheap labor that encourages domestic market expansion and foreign investment.¹⁸



v. Transportation and Traveling Convenience

At present, traveling and transporting goods from South Korea can be difficult due to its geographical position and the inability to move through the North. A reunified peninsula would allow people free movement to other countries that are connected to Korea. With an extensive transportation system that runs from the South to the North (like a railway) goods could be transported easily, which would lower shipping costs for businesses. This would open up opportunities for new businesses and create new job openings and more business relations between Korea and other countries.

Potential Trans-Korean Railway that connects to the Trans-Siberian Railway



Trans-Siberian Railway Map: Transportation system extending all the way to the United Kingdom

Traveling would also become more convenient for people in

Korea because there would be more options for travel. In particular, railroad transit could be a cheaper means of transportation compared to plane and could even potentially reduce CO₂ gas¹⁹ emissions in the long-

¹⁵CIA World Fact Book. 14 June 2011.

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html>>

¹⁶(in Korean) http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/art_print.html?artid=201104201945051

¹⁷(in Korean) <http://news.mk.co.kr/newsReadPrint.php?year=2010&no=444837>

¹⁸ http://cafe.naver.com/enewsgate.cafe?iframe_url=/ArticleRead.nhn%3Farticleid=143&

¹⁹ <http://lowcarbonlifestyle.org/downloadables/TheGuideToLowCarbonLifestyles.pdf>



vi. German Reunification Model



The German reunification may serve as a model or guide for Korea's own reunification. After the reunification of East and West Germany, Germany has been able to rise into playing a central role in the EU with the leading economy²⁰. Despite initial financial burdens, reunification will produce greater long-term benefits for Korea as a country. A unified Korea can use the strength of its population to reach economic success.

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Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany

© Helga Lade/Peter Arnold, Inc.



Arch of Reunification in Pyongyang, North Korea

© Wikipedia/By Kok Leong Yeo

²⁰Fischer, Joschka. "Germany cannot deny its leading role in an integrated Europe". *The Taipei Times*. 11 June 2009. <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2009/06/11/2003445843>>



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