

Japanese and American College Students View on Issues with North Korea

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Abstract

In North Korea, citizens mostly suffer from food shortages and violation human rights by the dictatorship regime. Meanwhile, this fact has not changed since Kim Jong-un succeeded the dictatorship in 2011. Kim Jong-Un's dictatorship is strengthening the nuclear weapons development program and conducts missile launching experiments which has been a growing concern to Japan, South Korea, and other countries around the world. Moreover, the kidnapping of Japanese citizens have yet to be solved. Our research sought to better understand the views on Kim Jong-Un held by university students in Japan and the US. Also, how they view North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and human rights issues? We surveyed 40 college students in the United States and 46 college students in Japan.

The survey results show university students in both countries found that Kim Jong-un, North Korea's leader, is not dealing fairly with the citizens of North Korea. Most students in both countries are concerned about the violation of human rights, nuclear weapons development, missile testing, and the kidnapped Japanese citizens. However, interestingly it turned out that American students are more conscious about Japanese abduction problems than Japanese students. More American students than Japanese students believe peaceful discussions to solve issues will be effective. Regarding the sanctions proposed to the UN Security Council, a small number of American students responded that it will be effective, but their expectations are low. Also, Japanese students' expectations are a bit higher regarding the effect of sanctions, but the degree to that effect is almost similar to American students.

Introduction

Since the Korean Peninsula was divided into the north and south in 1948, issues with North Korea began to rise. It has been 40 years since North Korea had started to abduct Japanese citizens. Of the 17 victims acknowledged by the Japanese government, 5 were returned in 2002, but there is no clear information on the remaining 12 people. After becoming the Kim Jong-Un administration in 2011, more issues with

North Korea have risen. Issues such as nuclear weapons development, missile launch experiment, worsening human rights violation, and the possibility of using nuclear weapons has been reported.

However, in recent news on North Korea, there were talks of a team from North Korea enter in Winter Olympics this year. This lead to the Korean peace summit, which has been finally been realized after 11 years. There is also plans for President Trump to meet and talk with Kim Jong-Un. However, it is difficult to obtain reliable information on whether everything with North Korea will happen officially and successfully.

1. Significance of the Study

When I study abroad to Japan, I saw North Korean news aired frequently and me born and raised in America I never thought about North Korea becoming an issue so I wanted to know American students point of view towards North Korea.

2. Research Questions:

- 1) What is the Japanese and American students' perception towards the North Korean leadership?
- 2) What North Korean conflicts are Japanese and American students aware of?
- 3) What solutions to the North Korea conflicts, are Japanese and American students aware of?

3. Research Background

3.1. History of North Korea and the Kim family

1948 After World War II, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two by the US and the Soviet Union. North Korea was under the rule of the Soviet Union, and South Korea was under American control. The Soviet Union named Kim Il Sung as a leader of North Korea ("History of North Korea", 2011). Since then, the Kim family has held the role of Leader of North Korea. The abduction of Japanese citizens was started by Kim Il-Sung. Kim Il-Sung raised his son , Kim Jong-Il, as a successor and since 1972, he held his power for 17 years. During this time, the economy had worsened, and food shortages grew worst. In 2011, Kim Jong Il's third son took over the administration, wanting to strengthen the military by expanding their nuclear weapons development program and missile launch experiments (Sang-Hunau, 2017) .

3.2. The abduction of Japanese citizens

The abduction of Japanese citizens occurred in the coastal areas of Japan and Europe during the 1970s to the 1980s. This was under the Kim Il Sung administration. The number of abductions victims confirmed by the Japanese government is 17. The expected purpose of the abductions are: 1. to educate North Korean agents about Japanese language and culture. And 2. to send those North Korean agents to South Korea and impersonate Japanese citizens who were abducted (Think, 2007). The Japanese government has continually asked the North Korean government to return the Japanese citizens who were abducted. However, the North Korean government has continually denied the accusations for the abduction of Japanese citizens for 20 years. The most major progress was seen when Prime Minister Koizumi visited North Korea in 2002 and talked directly to Kim Il Sung about the abduction of Japanese citizens. Kim Il Sung admitted to the abduction of 13 Japanese citizens and apologized. In October of the same year, 5 Japanese abductees were returned to Japan. In addition, regarding the remaining 8 people, it has been reported that they were deceased. North Korea's unresponsive nature has continued again ("Individual Cases," 2017).

3.3 North Korea and U.S. Government Comparison/Lawbreaking Punishments in North Korea and U.S.

North Korea is focusing on increasing military power and showing their power to other countries in the socialist Republic of Kim Jong Un's dictatorship. In the United States, the Federal Republic is under the US Constitution, this divides the federal government, state and power, which is responsible for the government. The United States is democratic politics based on the constitution (US Gov and CIA.Gov, 2018).

North Korea's minor offense is concentration camp and death penalty, the United States is warning and a fine. North Korea 's felony is public execution and torture, U.S. is death sentence (state by state) imprisonment prison sentence. North Korea and the United States minor offense and felony is North Korea's minor offense is being violent and escaping to other countries, the United States is shoplifting and speeding violation.

The North Korean felony's example is food theft and rebellion against the government, the United States is murder, robbery, arson. (North Korea and US punishment, 2018)

3.4 Human Rights Issues in North Korea and No Freedom in North Korea

There are various human rights problems in North Korea, but some of the problems are food rights, labor rights, and medical care in particular. For food rights, the economic collapse of the Soviet Union weakened the economy of North Korea, and decreased food shortage (Roberta Cohen, 2013). As a labor problem, the North Korean government dispatches North Korean workers abroad and earns foreign exchange earnings. As medical problems suffer from diseases that are easy to prevent such as tuberculosis and cataracts, medical care is not substantial (Roberta Cohen, 2013).

As for the restriction of freedom in the North Korean government, the following four are mentioned. One is no freedom of movement, its illegal for citizens to leave their own country (Freedom of Thought Report, 2017). The second point is no freedom of speech. In other words, citizens cannot criticize North Korea's regime or the leadership and have no opinion freely. The third is that there is no freedom of information (Freedom of Thought Report, 2017). Information is limited because Kim Jong Il's administration has the authority and control. Finally the last point is there is no religious freedom. Organized religion is not allowed in North Korea.

3.5 North Korean Government Passing Law and the North Korea and U.S. Military Spending

At the Supreme People's Assembly, it decides state policy and budgets. In addition to adopting laws and amending. At the Presidium, it supervises the laws of the state and ratified the treaty with foreign countries. (Law of North Korea, 2018) The North Korean Cabinet has supplement regulations that concerns state management that is in the constitution and departmental laws.

Both countries spend a large amount on military expenditure on government expenses, which is why it's affecting their economies. For North Korea's military

spending it spends 22% of the national budget and 57% in the U.S. (America's Defense Budget vs. North Korea, 2017) In North Korea, their military spending neglects food production and education. In the case of the United States military spending its reduction of budget measures against global warming and significant reduction of overseas aid is affecting them.

3.6 Missile launch and nuclear weapon experiments

Kim Jong-Un wanted to greatly strengthen North Korea's missile launching capabilities. He believed that strong weapons will suppress invasion of foreign countries and attract international attention, including the United States (Belvedere, 2017). North Korean missiles can reach North America (Nevette, 2016). The power of the nuclear weapons tested by North Korea in 2010 was about 4 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped at Nagasaki. And approximately 6 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped at Hiroshima (Ritzen, 2017). In addition, it is estimated that North Korea began the extraction of plutonium for nuclear warheads in 2013. In 2015, they have been estimated to have enough uranium to make 4-8 nuclear warheads. In 2016, they are estimated to have enough plutonium for approximately 10 warheads, and is believed to be capable of producing 20 to 100 nuclear warheads by 2020 (Arms Control Association, 2017). The United States possesses a missile defense system, but its effectiveness is still in question. This means the US government is not ready to fully accept 100% of North Korea's nuclear weapons threat (Ferdinando, 2018).

3.7. Comparison of the old sanctions and new sanctions

The new sanctions that was proposed by President Trump focuses on companies and organizations involved in the growth of the North Korean economy. This has allowed the US treasury the ability to ban entities such as companies and banks from the US financial system. In addition, the US treasury may seize assets that may be deemed in violation of the new sanctions measures. Over the past 180 days, there has been a prohibition on vessels and aircrafts entering the US that may stopped in North Korea (Tweed and Mohsin, 2017). The US military has investigated suspicious ships.

This has led to the black listing of 28 vessels from countries such as China, North Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Marshall Islands, Tanzania, Panama, and Comoros (Landler, 2018). The old sanctions, proposed by the Obama administration, focused on activities that funded North Korea's Nuclear Development program. These measures were taken by the United Nations. Both sanctions were aimed to stop North Korea's nuclear program (Tweed and Mohsin, 2017).

3.8. Peaceful discussions between the US and North Korea

The summit meeting of North Korea and the US is scheduled for May of 2018, during which no missile test will be done. If all goes well, North Korea's denuclearization and peaceful diplomacy will be successful. However, in case of failure, tensions with North Korea will rise and North Korea may continue to manufacture missiles (Landler, 2018).

4. Research Method

4.1. Survey participants

86 students participated in this survey. There were 46 Japanese students (7 boys, 38 girls, 1 other), and 40 American students (18 boys and 22 females).

4.2. Where the participants are from

92.5% of American college students were from California, 5% from Montana and 2.5% from Arizona. 2.17% Of the Japanese students are from Eastern Japan near the Sea of Japan, 23.91% were from Eastern Japan near the Pacific ocean, 32.61% were from Western Japan near the Sea of Japan, 34.78% were from Western Japan near the Pacific, and 6.52% answered "other".

4.3. Where participants received news on North Korea

As shown in Figure 1, many Japanese college students are mainly watching TV news programs, with internet news articles and social media being the secondary and tertiary source. Many American college students main source was social media, followed by internet articles and television news programs.

Figure 1: News source on North Korea

4.3. Survey method

We created questionnaires on google forum in Japanese and English to gather data online.

5. Survey Results

5.1. Research Question 1: What is the Japanese and American Student's Perception towards the North Korean Leadership?

As for the question what do you think about the North Korean government, American and Japanese students think that the North Korean government is very unfair (See Fig. 2).

Figure 2: What do you think about the North Korean Leadership

As for the North Korean citizens treated as human beings, more than 60% of Americans and Japanese students said that North Korean citizens are treated very unfairly as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: How fair do you believe North Korean citizens
are treated as human beings

Regarding to North Korean Government handling law-breaking citizens, 70% of Americans and 58.7% of Japanese students found that they felt unfair or very unfair about the government's response (See Fig. 4).

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree with the way
North Korea's leadership handles law-breaking citizens

Regarding the restriction of freedom by the North Korean government, nearly 80% of Americans and Japanese students do not support the restriction of freedom of speech at all (See Fig.5).

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree with the way North Korea's leadership restricts freedom of speech for non government affiliated groups

The results of the question, the way the North Korean Government passes laws it showed that most Americans and Japanese students found that they do not support the government's decision on law. On the other hand, more than 30% of the respondents said that they are unsure about it (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree with the way North Korean leadership passes laws

Regarding to the military budget of the North Korean government, most of American and Japanese students said they would not support the military budget of North Korea, but the students who answered unsure also exceeded 30% (See Fig. 7).

Figure 7:

5.2. Summary of Research Question 1 Findings

Most Japanese and American students, as a whole, found that students from both Japan and the United States have a negative views towards North Korea about not

treat citizens equally. Also, while Japanese and American students strongly oppose restrictions on freedom, many students responded that they do not know well about North Korea's government passing laws and military budgets. Furthermore, Japanese students are more concerned about the proportion of North Korean government expenditure to military expenditure than American students.

5.3. Research question 2: What North Korean conflicts are Japanese and American students aware of?

The survey asked about five conflicts with North Korea (Violation of human rights, nuclear weapons retention and development programs, missile launch experiments, statements on the use of nuclear weapons, and the abduction of Japanese citizens). Students were asked respondents to evaluate their level of awareness on a 4 point scale (very aware, aware, somewhat aware, and not aware). Fig. 8 shows the result. American students results show more awareness for the violations of human rights , nuclear weapons development programs, missile launch experiments, and statements nuclear weapons use than Japanese students. On the other hand, Japanese students have shown more awareness of the negotiations for the return of Japanese abductees.

Figure 8: How much of the following
North Korean conflicts are you aware of?

American Students

Japanese Students

0 25 50 75 100 (%) 0 25 50 75 100

The next question measured the degree of concern of the students using the same 5 conflicts. As shown in Figure 9, Japanese students had stronger concerns about nuclear weapons development program and missile launch experiments. American students show strong concerns for the violation of human rights and for the negotiations for returning the Japanese abductees.

Figure 9: What is your level of concern in regards to the following issues?

American Students

Japanese Students

0 25 50 75 100 (%) 0 25 50 75 100

The next question measured what the students believed the US government's concern for the same 5 conflicts. As shown in Figure 10, over 90% of Japanese students and over 70% US students believe the US government is mainly concerned

0 25 50 75 100 (%) 0 25 50 75 100

As shown in Figure 12, 97% Of American and Japanese students believe America’s attention was the primary target country for North Korea’s missile launching program. Japan and South Korea’s attention second and third.

Figure 12: Which country’s attention was North Korea trying to attract when they tested their missile launching capabilities and nuclear weapons?

0 25 50 75 100 (%) 0 25 50 75 100

5.4.Summary of research question 2

Majority of both American and Japanese students are concerned about the North Korea’s Nuclear development program, Nuclear use and Missile launching issues. On other hand, American students are more concerned about the negotiations for the return of Japanese citizens than Japanese students. There are more American students than Japanese students who are concerned about the negotiations for the return of Japanese citizens. However, a majority of Japanese students think that the Japanese government is most concerned about Missile launch experiments. Both American and Japanese students think that America is North Korea’s target country for attention, and that Japan and Korea follow the U.S.A. in North Korea's targets of concern.

5.5. Research question 3: What solutions to the North Korea conflicts are Japanese and American students aware of?

As seen in figure 13, there is a large percentage of students (America and Japan) that believe PEACEFUL DISCUSSIONS will help with issues with North Korea

Figure 13: How effective do you believe PEACEFUL DISCUSSIONS
will help resolve the following issues?

As shown in figure 14, approximately 50% of Japanese students believe that statements from President Trump are effective, while about 77% of American students think that they are ineffective.

Figure 14:How effective, do you believe, are STATEMENTS used by President Trump for solving conflicts with North Korea and its nuclear weapons research and development?

In figure 15, Approximately 40% of Japanese students believe NEW SANCTIONS can be effective, however 55% American students are unsure of the effectiveness.

Figure 15: How effective do you believe the NEW SANCTIONS on North Korea will help stop the North Korean nuclear weapons research and development?

Lastly in figure 16, results show both groups of students' thoughts on the effectiveness of taking MILITARY ACTION were similar. However, there was approximately 10% more Japanese students that believe it will be effective

Figure 16: How effective do you believe taking MILITARY ACTION
would help resolve conflicts with North Korea?

5.6. Summary of Research Question 3 Findings

Half of the students in both countries think that peaceful talks are effective against North Korean problem, while the proportion of Japanese students who believe in the effectiveness of military action is slightly high. Regarding remarks by President Trump about nuclear weapons retention and development, we believe that nearly half of Japanese are effective, but we found that most American students think they are ineffective. Regarding to sanctions, we found that the number of American students who responded that they were effective was very small portion, but nearly half of Japanese students thought that they had sanctions.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

Most of the students in both U.S. and Japan have negative views toward the North Korean government, which is probably due to the influence of the media. Also, there are not a few students who answered "Unsure," because this is because the North Korean government is an closed country and no information is disclosed and it is impossible to know the exact system. Japanese students have growing concerns about North Korea's nuclear weapons development and missile launch tests, which may be due to Japan's changing security measures. American students have shown a strong

concern about the violation of human rights and the return of Japanese citizens. This may be because of American students coming from a diverse and individualistic rights focused country. And showed stronger concern about human rights violations such as the return of Japanese people. In terms of the validity of President Trump's statement, new sanctions and military action, the opinions of both students are different. However, a majority of students in Japan and the United States think that there is a possibility that peaceful discussions may be settled by conflicts with North Korea, while Japanese students expecting more active response there were not much

7. Current Events with North Korea

North-South summit meeting in 11 years have been announced on April 27, Kim Jong-Un and President Moon-Jae-In of Korea will talk about " nuclear-free Korean Peninsula through complete denuclearization" And signed a joint declaration that aimed at denuclearization, peace consolidation, development of inter-Korean relations. The two leaders also announced that they would aim to conclude a peace treaty officially concluding the Korean War that ended in the 1953 Armistice Agreement. At the same time, expectations for the resolution of Japanese abductees are increasing. As a result of this inter-Korean summit meeting, with the aim of harmonizing the inter-Korean relations, it is strengthening economic power in North Korea and South Korea secures economic assistance from the United States. The United States demands denuclearization from the Korean Peninsula, and Japan seems that they are aiming at resolving the abduction issue and releasing North Korea from nuclear weapons use crisis respectively.

8. Limitation of the Study and Future Research

As a limitation of the research, it is difficult to find an accurate and academic information source for research background due to closed country of North Korea and subjects that change day by day, and the survey participants were mostly women. Also, since most American students were from California, results cannot be generalized. As a future research topic, develop and expand our research on North Korea's nuclear

weapons development, about the lives of returned Japanese abductees and what daily life is like for North Korean citizens.

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