

# 2017 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER TOPIC ANALYSIS

## PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

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## Topic Analysis

Resolved: Deployment of anti-missile systems is in South Korea's best interest.

### Historical and Current Overview

In the late summer of 2017, Kim Jong-Un began a series of aggressive tests of his nuclear arsenal and intercontinental ballistic missile technology that sparked international interest and brought North Korea back into the media spotlight. It is yet unknown how this conflict will play out as it continues to ignite passionate debate around the world. In early August, the NSDA released its topic for September and October of 2017 which appropriately brought into focus the complexity of the continued conflict in North and South Korea. In order to understand the totality of the resolution we will give a cohesive explanation of both the history and current manifestations of the conflict as they relate to South Korean missile defense, review key definitions, framing options, and major affirmative and negative arguments.

In 1910 Japan invaded Korea, conquering the strategically significant peninsula in order to secure a military route to rival China. Like most colonial powers, Japan's rule was harsh and oppressive and resulted in the extreme repression of the Korean people. Over the course 30 years of colonial rule Korea experienced rapid economic growth at the expense of the individual freedoms of Koreans. By the end of Japan's colonial rule Korea had undergone a massive population shift from rural to urban living and seen massive expansion of commerce. When Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945 at the end of World War II a vacuum was created in Korea that was soon filled—in the classic Cold-War manner—by the United States and the Soviet Union. Both major actors declared themselves the legitimate government of Korea and were ultimately unable to reach any form of compromise. In 1950, the Soviet-backed government of Pyongyang invaded the South, officially beginning the Korean War<sup>1</sup>. With the US and UN backing the South and China and the USSR backing the North, the Korean war cost over 2.5 million lives over the course of three years. When an armistice was reached in 1954 the border that cut between the two nations became a buffer zone called the demilitarized zone (DMZ). The DMZ separating the North and the South maintains a military buffer that signifies the continuation of the conflict through the Cold War and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the time since the armistice was reached, many developments have occurred that uniquely shape the relationship between the North and South and how they view missile defense. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the U.S. military began installing the first battery of the anti-missile defense system, THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) within South Korea. The U.S. was successfully able to install two of these batteries before progress was suspended by the newly elected president, Moon Jae-in.<sup>2</sup> While historically South Korea had allowed the U.S. to utilize both the Air Force's Patriot Advanced Capability battery as well as the Aegis Combat System as forms of missile defense from within the state, THAAD's utilization of expansive radar and

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<sup>1</sup> 20th CENTURY: Korea as a Colony of Japan, 1910-1945 | Central Themes and Key Points | Asia for Educators | Columbia University. Accessed August 16, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Fifield, Anna. "U.S. Starts 'swiftly' Installing Controversial Antimissile Battery in South Korea." The Washington Post. WP Company, 26 Apr. 2017. Web. 19 Aug. 2017.

unique ability to intercept high altitude missiles changes the conversation.<sup>3</sup> THAAD additionally exposes the way in which South Korea remains trapped between two great powers like a ship crushed between two whales. While the US has a strong interest in deploying THAAD to protect their military bases across the country, China views THAAD as a threat to its own security and sovereignty. The radar utilized to detect incoming missiles stretches far into China's borders and changes the "strategic equilibrium" of power which China believes is essential to maintaining its current position in the region.<sup>4</sup> Overall, the deployment of anti-missile systems in South Korea is of great importance to both China and the United States and how South Korea reacts to their influence will have drastic impacts on the lives of South Koreans and their best interests.

### Key Definitions and Framing

To approach this topic, it is first essential to understand the major terms utilized in the resolution and to be able to strategically utilize these terms in conjunction with framing to shape the way in which the round progresses.

The first major term in the resolution is *deployment*. While seemingly simple, the way in which we frame deployment in the round can have large implications for both teams. According to Black's Law Dictionary, *deployment* signifies "the way to start an activity or program that is needed in the whole organization."<sup>5</sup> While on face this seems intuitive, it is important to think about the current progression of South Korea's missile defense systems. Looking at the progression of THAAD in South Korea brings into question the way in which the resolution interacts with the status quo and asks us to determine if the resolution is asking for the deployment of *more* anti-missile systems, or for the defense of existing systems. In short, defining this term can determine how you frame or advocate for the status quo.

The second key term to define is *anti-missile systems*. This definition is a non-issue in the vast majority of rounds but does have important implications whether or not certain military technology is brought within the purview of the resolution. The pre-emptive strike system known as "Kill Chain" is a comprehensive military plan to engage in a first strike to take out North Korea's missile launch pads and warheads as a way of preventing a strike on South Korea. To exclude Kill Chain from the debate one must simply define an anti-missile system as one which engages in purely defensive action. The Collins English Dictionary fulfills this need by defining anti-missile as "designed as a defense against ballistic missiles."<sup>6</sup> To include Kill Chain in your argument you can utilize a more simplistic definition such as the one from

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<sup>3</sup> Panda, Ankit. "After THAAD, What's Next in South Korea's Missile Defense Plans?" The Diplomat. August 16, 2016. Accessed August 26, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Tweed, David. "Explaining Thaad, and Why It So Bothers China: QuickTake Q&A." Bloomberg.com. March 06, 2017. Accessed August 26, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> "What Is DEPLOYMENT? Definition of DEPLOYMENT (Black's Law Dictionary)." The Law Dictionary. 19 Oct. 2012. Web. 19 Aug. 2017.

<sup>6</sup> "Definition of 'antimissile'." Antimissile Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary. Accessed August 26, 2017.

Dictionary.com which defines anti-missile as “a ballistic device for seeking and destroying enemy missiles.”<sup>7</sup>

The third crucial term to define is *South Korea's best interests*. Importantly, this is also the place where the majority of the framing debate should occur. The most common way to achieve this is by framing best interests in a way that prioritizes the prevention of loss of life. Lives are both irreversible and a prerequisite to accessing any other rights which makes this an advantageous strategy when approaching weighing in the second half of the round. Other ways to shape the debate through “best interests” is by framing this issue as either long-term or short-term. A long-term framework will enable the team to impact to issues such as security, sovereignty, and world order. A short-term framework allows the team to impact to high magnitude though short term effects such as loss of life.

### Affirmative Arguments

**Deterrence:** The possession of anti-missile systems provides a method of deterrence. Because an attack would neither land nor result in casualties, anti-missile systems can deter North Korea from attacking in the first place. The implementation of anti-missile systems also signals to North Korea that the U.S. is committed to protecting their ally which increases the risk North Korea takes on by firing missiles towards South Korea. In addition, South Korea continues to be protected by the American nuclear umbrella which extends to allies of the U.S.

**Effectiveness:** Anti-missile systems provide defense in the case of an attack. Radar detection capabilities combined with a multi-layered system made up of THAAD, Aegis, and PAC2 or PAC3 provide a cohesive defense which will both deter an attack and save lives if an attack is carried out. This argument is well utilized in conjunction with the imminent threat argument that North Korea is likely to attack.

**Imminent Threat:** Anti-missile systems provide essential defense for South Korea as a concrete way to decrease the imminent North Korean threat. This argument frames an attack as inevitable because of current North Korean weapon development and testing trends and the likelihood of regime collapse within North Korea.

**Diplomatic Relations with the US:** Diplomatic relations with the U.S. play a critical role both in South Korean foreign affairs as well as the domestic success of its economy. Refusing to implement the remaining THAAD batteries signals to the U.S. that the South Korean government does not value their strategic interests. There is some debate over whether the U.S. will merely change the way they interact with the Moon administration or whether rejecting THAAD would lead to a large-scale rethinking of USROK relations.

**South Korean Proliferation:** Anti-missile systems that protect South Korean interests prevent South Korean from pursuing policies that would result in the production of nuclear warheads and other offensive military equipment. Without US presence and support, South Korea is more

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<sup>7</sup> "Antimissile." Dictionary.com. Accessed August 26, 2017.

likely to turn to offensive tactics (like Kill Chain) rather than relying on defensive strategies (like THAAD, Aegis, and PAC).

### Negative Arguments

**Economic Stability:** South Korea poses the risk of alienating their largest trading partner if they were to continue implementing anti-missile systems. China, who constitutes 25.1% of Korean exports, feels threatened by advancing missile technology, afraid that it will alter the strategic balance of the region.<sup>8</sup> After the announcement that South Korea would be supporting the deployment of THAAD, China unofficially began sanctioning its trading partner, preventing certain products from being sold across borders, restricting tourism, and even restricting Korean pop music.<sup>9</sup> The alienation of China would have disastrous effects on the South Korean economy which relies heavily on their imports and market for exports.

**Chinese Diplomacy:** China plays an important role on the Korean peninsula as a major diplomatic actor in both the state of affairs in South Korea and North Korea. With a strong interest in preventing regime collapse and all-out-war which would send refugees pouring into the country and bring U.S. influence up against its border, China strategically benefits from diplomatically de-escalating the situation. Unfortunately, because anti-missile systems aggravate China and change the balance of powers in the region, China can only diplomatically and economically incentivize North Korea to disarm if the deployment of anti-missile systems is halted.

**Arms Race:** One of the biggest challenges to anti-missile systems is the continued development of mechanisms utilized to bypass them. If North Korea were to lose its ability to strike South Korea it is possible that that could develop mechanisms to send large numbers of missiles at once to outflank the missile defense system. In addition, the further development of hypersonic missiles may allow North Korea to sidestep even a multi-layered defense system.

**Anti-Missiles Ineffective:** Anti-missile systems do not protect South Koreans from a variety of threats and create a false sense of security which undermines safety. Anti-missile systems do not prevent attacks from conventional warfare methods such as artillery shells, troop invasion, and tanks. In addition, the THAAD technology does not cover Seoul, the largest population center in South Korea. This argument works well in conjunction with the arms race argument because escalation paired with ineffectiveness will result in massive casualties.

**Political Backlash:** When elected in 2017, South Korean President Moon Jae-in expressed extreme suspicion of US ploys to implement THAAD within his country. Promoting diplomacy

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<sup>8</sup> "South Korea's Top Trading Partners." World's Top Exports. January 31, 2017. Accessed August 26, 2017

<sup>9</sup> McGuire, Kristian. "Dealing With Chinese Sanctions: South Korea and Taiwan." The Diplomat. May 12, 2017.

and dialogue with North Korea, Moon suspended deployment of THAAD to give his government time to review environmental standards and to investigate the defense ministry's questionable approval of the system. THAAD's implementation undermines Moon's strategy of peace and discourse and may affect his effectiveness as a political leader within South Korea.

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