

# **Diffusing the Bomb: Japan and South Korea's Road to Nuclear Latency**

## **I. Introduction**

The continuous ringing in your ears would have been more concerning if it weren't for the fact that your skin was melting off your bones. The sheer shock of the sight prevents you from screaming. You pass out. Over the next few days, you oscillate between reality and the darkness of your dreams, surrounded by multiple bodies, alive and dead, in various state of decay in a rundown school gymnasium – you've come to learn that there's very little left of the city to house all the injured; most medical personnel has perished as well. Soon, you do as well.

Just a few short years later, in a new life devoid of the trauma of a bomb, which melts your skin and causes cancer, you will be a soldier, a boy of barely 18, fighting against your brethren in a war, which will forever divide your one nation. You also live long enough to understand that your nation will never unite and will forever be marked by the intense vitriol of incoming conflict, so why bother insisting on peace anyway?

**Indeed, why would Japan and South Korea only develop as nuclear latent states, by pursuing a peaceful nuclear energy policy, in a post-WW2 world, despite historical paradigms (i.e. Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and rising political tension (e.g. DPRK)?**

This is the fundamental question this paper asks and the answer to which I believe can be found in their respective **institutions**, which prevent full-scale nuclear proliferation, although with varying results in the conceptualization of their nuclear policies. Japan's policy has become increasingly contingent on various veto players, which prevent full-scale proliferation. South Korea, despite a more centralized (and authoritarian) governance during the initial stages of its development and attempts to develop its own weapons in the 1970s,

has largely been unable to go further than Japan in terms of nuclear energy development and is also taking advantage of U.S. extended deterrence.

The reason as to why I am not considering **ideas** as a viable explanation is because ideas themselves do not pass legislation and do not decide on policies. Ideas may certainly guide the inception of overall policies (e.g. Japan's Three Principles<sup>1</sup>), but as time passes and policies become more entrenched into the institutional frameworks of a country, the less relevant do the initial ideas, that gave rise to the policies, become. I acknowledge Japan's pledge to remain a nuclear latent state due their history as the only country that has suffered a nuclear attack, but ultimately, this pledge does not prevent or influence overall nuclear hedging on their part. As for South Korea, considering they themselves were fully on the road to building a bomb in the first place before they were prevented by the U.S.<sup>2</sup>, I find that their idea of civilian use of nuclear energy was more so transplanted into their policy decisions through foreign intervention, as opposed to it being naturally born out of a genuine concern for nuclear non-proliferation.

As for **interests**, although there is undoubtedly a financial significance behind the strategy of nuclear latency (e.g. private enterprises in Japan such as TEPCO are the main owners of nuclear energy infrastructure in Japan<sup>3</sup>; job opportunities for locals at nuclear power plants, which drive regional economy), I believe that institutions remain the main driver behind nuclear latency due to their foundational structure. If it weren't for the frameworks set by the South Korean and Japanese governments, enterprises such as TEPCO

---

<sup>1</sup>“MOFA: Three Non-Nuclear Principles,” Mofa.go.jp, 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/>.

<sup>2</sup> Troy Stangarone, “Comparing Contexts: South Korea's Potential Nuclear Armament in the 1970s & 2020s - Korea Economic Institute of America,” Korea Economic Institute of America, March 9, 2023, <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/comparing-contexts-south-koreas-potential-nuclear-armament-in-the-1970s-2020s/>.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques E.C Hymans, “Veto Players, Nuclear Energy, and Nonproliferation: Domestic Institutional Barriers to a Japanese Bomb,” *International Security* 36, no. 2 (2011): 154–89, <https://doi.org/10.2307/41289701>.

or KNHP (Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power) would not be involved in the process in the first place.

The paper will be divided in the following manner: first, I will discuss the data and methodology I am using to support my analysis of Japanese and South Korean nuclear latency policy. Then I will dedicate a part to each country individually. Following this, I will outline the implications of such policies considering their antagonistic neighbors, such as China and DPRK. Finally, I will make some concluding remarks.

## **II. Data and Methodology**

The main portions of the paper will be supported by maps of nuclear facilities and text heuristic data from documents to follow the development of South Korean and Japanese nuclear policies from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until now.

### *a. Text heuristics*

For the text heuristics analysis, I will use a number of official documents where available to assess the general direction of the country's nuclear policies and whether or not they stay consistent, or they change depending on externalities, e.g. Fukushima 2011. Also assessment of the general direction of their policies will point to the influential institutions, which played a role in the establishment of those same policies (e.g. the Japanese Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC), which actually publishes annual White Papers on the development of nuclear energy in Japan, that I have used extensively in my analysis. For Japan, I have used official laws, statements, bilateral/ multilateral agreements and white papers. I have also divided the analysis between four time periods – the beginning years (1950s-1960s), the middle (1970s-1990s), pre-Fukushima (2000s) and post-Fukushima (2010s-2020s). I am using Fukushima as a temporal divider due to its massive global impact

on the development of nuclear energy and the perceptions of its civilian use.<sup>4</sup> For South Korea, however, I am taking a broader approach to my analysis due to two factors: a) document constraints – there simply are not enough available that serve my purposes; b) the broader approach actually serves the purposes of the point I am making in the case study of the country.

*b. Maps*

I have created two maps, visualizing the current state of nuclear infrastructure in both countries to serve as a concluding visualization following the analysis. The data used for the maps will come from the official Power Reactor Information System by the IAEA<sup>5</sup>, which outline the locations of the working reactors. I have used the respective Wikipedia pages of the reactors to find the specific coordination data (this aligns with their location as shown on Google Maps, which is my reference point), so that I can input it into the map.

### **III. Japan – the entrenched state**

Japan's nuclear policy finds its roots in the 1955 Atomic Energy Basic Act. However, it isn't until 1967 when Prime Minister Eisaku Sato formally states the three guiding principles behind their policy – non-possession, non-production and non-introduction of nuclear weapons.<sup>6</sup> Thus, arguably, the nature of Japan's policy has always been underlined by civilian

---

<sup>4</sup> YOUNGHWAN KIM, MINKI KIM, and WONJOON KIM, "Effect of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster on Global Public Acceptance of Nuclear Energy," *Energy Policy* 61 (October 2013): 822–28, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2013.06.107>.

<sup>5</sup> IAEA, "PRIS - Reactor Status Reports - Operational & Long-Term Shutdown - by Country," [pris.iaea.org](https://pris.iaea.org/PRIS/WorldStatistics/OperationalReactorsByCountry.aspx), n.d., <https://pris.iaea.org/PRIS/WorldStatistics/OperationalReactorsByCountry.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> "MOFA: Three Non-Nuclear Principles," [Mofa.go.jp](https://www.mofa.go.jp), 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/>.







*Corpus 3.* Ministerial Speech at IAEA Conference, Japan-US Nuclear Energy Action Plan, Diplomatic Bluebook, Japan-European Atomic Energy Commission Agreement, METI White Paper, JAEC White papers 2003, 2006 and 2008

Visibly, the inclusion of international actors and their institutional entrenchment did not sway the progression or inherent elements of Japanese nuclear policy, which remained focus on research and development with an emphasis on cooperation.

By the early 2010s, close to 30% of Japan's domestic electricity was generated from its 54 nuclear reactors, which at the time made it the third largest producer of nuclear power in the world.<sup>14</sup> And then, disaster struck – the triple disaster of 11<sup>th</sup> of March will remain ingrained in the psyche of not Japanese society, but also in the global community as well for a long time to come. Japan's nuclear energy development immediately took a hit with Japan effectively closing down all of its nuclear reactors.<sup>15</sup> Since then, only 14 have been reopened and are in operation.<sup>16</sup> Before the disaster, they expected by 2017 40% of their energy supplies to come from nuclear energy, now they have set a goal of 20% by 2030.<sup>17</sup> In essence, however, it is almost as if the disaster has further intensified the institutionalization of Japanese nuclear policy, as exemplified by the 2012 Act for the Establishment of a Nuclear Regulation Authority, present in the corpus below.

---

<sup>14</sup> Harsh Vaibhav, "Japan's Complicated Relationship with Nuclear Energy," Earth.Org, March 25, 2026, <https://earth.org/japan-complicated-relationship-with-nuclear-energy/>.

<sup>15</sup> Lindsay Iversen, Daniel B Poneman, and Clara Gillispie, "Japan's Energy Picture Fifteen Years Post-Fukushima," Cfr.org (Council on Foreign Relations, March 18, 2026), <https://www.cfr.org/articles/japans-energy-picture-fifteen-years-post-fukushima>.

<sup>16</sup> "PRIS - Country Statistics," pris.iaea.org, n.d., <https://pris.iaea.org/PRIS/CountryStatistics/CountryStatisticsLandingPage.aspx>.

<sup>17</sup> World Nuclear Association, "Nuclear Power in Japan - World Nuclear Association," world-nuclear.org, February 4, 2025, <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/japan-nuclear-power>.



IAEA. Thus, the institutions in the case of Japan actually served to **entrench** the regime of peaceful nuclear policy.

*Map 1.* Japan's current nuclear infrastructure – 14 reactors in total



#### **IV. South Korea – the volatile state**

South Korea's nuclear energy history actually began before they passed their Atomic Energy Law in 1958, with their membership in the IAEA in 1957. The year following the Atomic Energy Law, the Office of Atomic Energy was also established.<sup>19</sup> They were also signatories to the NPT.<sup>20</sup> This formulaic structure is reminiscent of Japan's Basic Atomic Law and the creation of the JAEC. However, South Korea's development of a civilian nuclear policy began in earnest in the late 1970s.

Beforehand, they actually pursued an active nuclear policy, seemingly as a form of deterrence against North Korea. Historically speaking South Korean governance was also

---

<sup>19</sup> World Nuclear Association, "Nuclear Power in South Korea - World Nuclear Association," World-nuclear.org, 2025, <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-o-s/south-korea#history-of-the-nuclear-sector>.

<sup>20</sup> Se Young Jang, "Bringing Seoul into the Non-Proliferation Regime | Wilson Center," www.wilsoncenter.org, September 20, 2017, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/bringing-seoul-into-the-non-proliferation-regime>.



*Corpus 5. Declassified CIA documents, e.g. Embassy notes and Telegrams*

Thus, while in Japan institutional structures guided civilian nuclear policy from the beginning with international actor's involvement becoming a later element of its policy, with South Korea, the inverse happened. It was due to foreign pressure that they reestablished a peaceful and civilian policy.

Similar to Japan, with the expansion of nuclear infrastructure, there was also pushback in the form of the 1980s and 1990s anti-nuclear movement<sup>24</sup>, which arguably came to a head decades later. As previously established, Fukushima presents a harrowing case for nuclear policy globally and South Korea, as a close geographical neighbor of Japan, was quick to take note of the disaster, ironically enough a few years following the disaster. Political coalitions during the Lee (2008-2012) and Park (2013-2016) administrations pursued a strong nuclear energy policy – a “nuclear developmental state”, which further portrays the role of institutions in the faces of various political entities, such as bureaucrats, politicians and the nuclear industry, as they vied to develop further South Korea's nuclear strategy.<sup>25</sup> However, the Moon administration (2017-2022) actually reversed this approach, by pursuing a polarizing nuclear phase out by focusing on renewable energy – polarizing because it showed the inherent difference between elite and public perception of nuclear proliferation (mainly due to a lack of knowledge on economic consequences of pursuing nuclear weapons)<sup>26</sup>, nuclear and renewable energy industries, but also because by the end of his presidency, he had actually begun to reverse the phase out.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Scott Victor Valentine and Benjamin K Sovacool, “The Sociopolitical Economy of Nuclear Power Development in Japan and South Korea,” *Special Section: Carbon Reduction at Community Scale* 38, no. 12 (2010): 7971–79, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2010.09.036>.

<sup>25</sup> Taedong Lee, “From Nuclear Energy Developmental State to Energy Transition in South Korea: The Role of the Political Epistemic Community,” *Environmental Policy and Governance* 31, no. 2 (October 29, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1919>.

<sup>26</sup> Sangyong Son and Jong Hee Park, “Nonproliferation Information and Attitude Change: Evidence from South Korea,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September 16, 2022, 002200272211267, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221126723>.

<sup>27</sup> Ryeon-Woo Kim et al., “Political Polarization and the Energy Policy Paradox: Assessing the Impact of South Korea's Nuclear Power Phase-out Policy,” *Environmental Politics*, October 4, 2024, 1–24,

The following corpus, forged with cooperation agreements between South Korea and Singapore, Turkey, and the U.S., in its essence shows the cooperative and peaceful nature of the current nuclear energy regime in the country, as well as the reverses phase out strategy the new presidencies have undertaken, by engaging in bilateral agreements with others. It also visualizes the priorities undertaken by such a policy in light of said bilateral agreements – a focus on a legal framework (see: permits, presidential measures, decree and standards), which is further highlighted by the inclusion of their new Nuclear Safety Act. In essence, there is a clear continuation of the established framework set by U.S. intervention in the 1970s, although the sheer fact that a foreign actor had such considerable clout to alter their nuclear policy, coupled with the polarizing phase out of the 2010s/early 2020s, actually serves as a reminder of the volatile nature of the South Korean policy overall.



Figure 11

Corpus 6. Press Releases on  
Cooperation with Turkey, Singapore,  
U.S., Nuclear Safety Act 2025

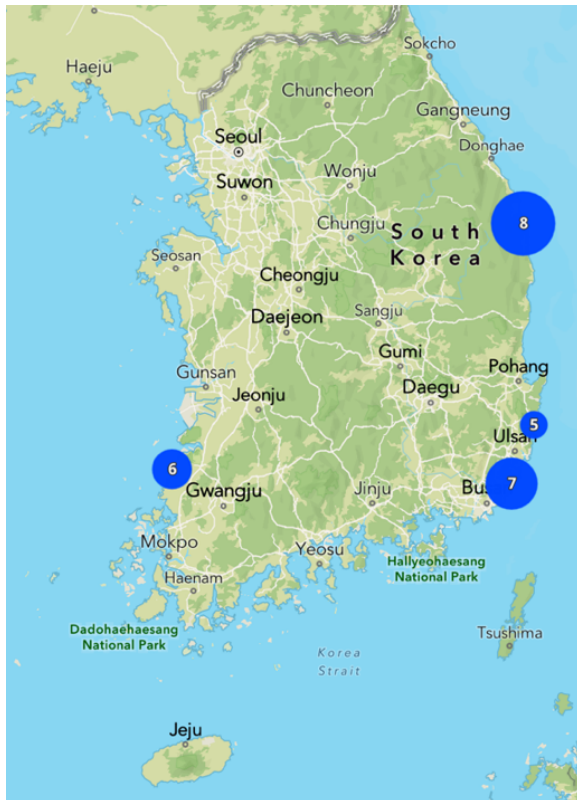
As it currently stands, South Korea is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest exporter of nuclear energy in the world, behind the U.S., France, Russia and China<sup>28</sup>. According to the governments 11<sup>th</sup>

---

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2024.2411933>; Sangyong Son and Jong Hee Park, “Nonproliferation Information and Attitude Change: Evidence from South Korea,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September 16, 2022, 002200272211267, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221126723>.

<sup>28</sup>“Five Countries Account for 71% of the World’s Nuclear Generation Capacity - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA),” Eia.gov, 2025, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65904>.

electricity plan (2024-2038), they plan on nuclear energy shares to increase to almost 32% by 2030, and to almost 36% by 2038.<sup>29</sup> Thus, unlike its counterpart, South Korea has largely retained its share of nuclear energy post-external disaster as well, as its nuclear phase out was relatively short-lived, and has even surpassed Japan in terms of its nuclear energy output.



Map 2. South Korea Nuclear Infrastructure –  
26 reactors in total

Overall, the possibility of South Korea going nuclear is very unlikely as well, despite a 2023 statement by the now disgraced former president that should the need arise to go nuclear they will<sup>30</sup>. It seems that South Korea, much like Japan seems content with the current non-proliferation status quo, although the work of the institutions at hand actually prove that this policy is actually more **volatile**, as opposed to entrenched the way it is in the

---

<sup>29</sup> World Nuclear Association, “Nuclear Power in South Korea - World Nuclear Association,” World-nuclear.org, 2025, <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-o-s/south-korea#history-of-the-nuclear-sector>.

<sup>30</sup> Gabriela Bernal, “‘If the Problem Becomes More Serious’: South Korea Talks Going Nuclear | Lowy Institute,” www.lowyinstitute.org, January 18, 2023, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/if-problem-becomes-more-serious-south-korea-talks-going-nuclear>.

case of Japan. Thus, I also believe that institutional hurdles would actually be less of a problem should South Korea wish to pursue an active nuclear policy.

## V. Implications in the context of their antagonistic neighbors

### a. Considerations about their nuclear policy vis-à-vis China

Currently, the prevalent issue of China mainly concerns Japan. In November of 2025, Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi made remarks about a potential military escalation of Cross-Strait relations, which would be deemed as threatening to Japan's security, thus fulfilling the criteria of self-defense in terms of direct military involvement.<sup>31</sup> This, of course, wasn't left with no reactions on part of Beijing. In December of 2025, China made a showcase of military power in Taiwanese waters.<sup>32</sup> China has also further escalated the situation directly with Japan by imposing economic sanctions<sup>33</sup>, and placing Japan on an export watchlist for firms that may be involved in.<sup>34</sup> The tourism sector has also further taken a hit due to the spat between the two countries.<sup>35</sup> Thus, despite the military showcase in December of last year, it is clear that China is only intensifying its economic clout as opposed to making any rash decisions in terms of a military escalation.

---

<sup>31</sup>Gabriele Ninivaggi, "Takaichi Stands Firm on Controversial Taiwan Contingency Remarks," The Japan Times, November 10, 2025, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/11/10/japan/politics/takaichi-taiwan/>; Gabriele Ninivaggi, "Takaichi's Taiwan Tumult: A Closer Look at the Japanese Leader's Contentious Remarks," The Japan Times, December 3, 2025, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/12/03/japan/explainer/explainer-japan-existential-crisis/>.

<sup>32</sup>Yimou Lee, Joe Cash, and Liz Lee, "China Encircles Taiwan in Massive Military Display," Reuters, December 30, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-launches-live-firing-drills-around-taiwan-its-biggest-war-games-date-2025-12-30/>.

<sup>33</sup>Peter Guo and Jay Ganglani, "China Seeks to Inflict Economic Blow on Japan amid Escalating Spat over Taiwan," NBC News, November 19, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/asia/china-seeks-inflict-economic-blow-japan-escalating-spat-taiwan-rcna244555>.

<sup>34</sup>Simina Mistreanu, "China Restricts Exports to 40 Japanese Entities with Ties to Military," AP News, February 24, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/china-japan-export-controls-45b91393374ddaebcd6d381e51eefc12>.

<sup>35</sup>Justin McCurry, "Chinese Tourists Shun Japan over Lunar New Year Holiday as Rift Deepens," The Guardian (The Guardian, February 17, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/17/china-lunar-new-year-2026-chinese-tourists-shun-japan>.

In such terms of military escalation, China has indeed grown its nuclear warhead stockpile nearly doubling it since 2019 to reach 600 warheads.<sup>36</sup> However, the PRC's official nuclear policies since the Mao era has been geared towards a "first strike" and deterrence,<sup>37</sup> which means that even if a military escalation should occur, it will not grow to the point of using nuclear power, unless China is stricken first.

*b. Considerations about their nuclear policy vis-à-vis North Korea*

Undoubtedly, North Korea is a much more aggressive neighbor than China at least in terms of military escalation. This can be attributed to the fact that the country is isolated and lacks economic clout, but its very ideology is underlined by the idea of militarization and self-reliance.<sup>38</sup> Thus, its shows of force can be deemed as much more menacing, As recently as January 2026, North Korea has launched ballistic missiles in the waters between Japan and the Korean peninsula.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the fact that the DPRK had signed the NPT and both countries in the peninsula came out with a joined stated about denuclearization of the region in 1992<sup>40</sup>, North Korea continued to pursue a nuclear weapons policy – it left the NPT in 2003 and its first nuclear test was conducted in late 2006, despite talks to abandon its nuclear policy and to rejoin the NPT.<sup>41</sup> The issue is further exacerbated by the fact that the Korean conflict is still

---

<sup>36</sup> Matthew P Funaiole and Brian Hart, "China's Military in 10 Charts," Csis.org, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-military-10-charts>.

<sup>37</sup>M. Taylor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros, "China's Search for Assured Retaliation: The Evolution of Chinese Nuclear Strategy and Force Structure," *International Security* 35, no. 2 (October 2010): 48–87, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00016](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00016).

<sup>38</sup> Anthony H Cordesman and Ashley Hess, "The Evolving Military Balance in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia," Csis.org, 2026, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/evolving-military-balance-korean-peninsula-and-northeast-asia>.

<sup>39</sup> Hyung-Jin Kim, "North Korea Launches Ballistic Missiles toward Sea," AP News, January 27, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/north-south-korea-projectile-launched-9bb07a5ffb0782a27d0dbdf7b6871978>.

<sup>40</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, "Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula View|Documents | North Korean Nuclear Issue Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea," Mofa.go.kr, 2013, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5476/view.do?seq=305870&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multiitm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=&page=6&titleNm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5476/view.do?seq=305870&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multiitm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&page=6&titleNm=).

<sup>41</sup> Columbia Law School, "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History | Korean Legal Studies," kls.law.columbia.edu, 2024, <https://kls.law.columbia.edu/content/north-koreas-nuclear-program-history>.

ongoing, as the two sides have never signed a proper peace treaty.<sup>42</sup> Thus, North Korea poses a great security threat not only to its southern neighbor, but Japan as well.

It is doubtful whether or not South Korea, specifically, would go about developing nuclear weapons in order to deter North Korea, as previous experience in the 1970s has shown that such goals are more than likely to be squandered. Nonetheless, it is highly likely that both countries would look into further development of their military capabilities, something that Japan has already begun to pursue.<sup>43</sup>

## **VI. Conclusion**

Both South Korea and Japan are beholden to institutions, which dictate the shape of their nuclear policies. For the most part, they have remained unchanged, focused on civilian and peaceful purposes, with the exception of South Korea's stint to produce its own weapons in the 1970s, which was thwarted by the U.S. Despite setbacks such as the Fukushima incident of 2011, the two countries have not backed down on spearheading the use of nuclear energy for domestic purposes and promoting nuclear non-proliferation internationally.

Despite the relatively hostile environment of their neighbors, China and the DPRK, it is highly unlikely that they would pursue nuclear proliferation in the future. Military escalation with China is most unlikely because of its tendency to pursue economic sanctions, unless Taiwan becomes a bigger point of contention in the future. North Korea, on the other hand, will continue to be a direct security issue, because of the conflict in the Korean Peninsula. However, nuclear non-proliferation does not deter the development of Japan and South Korea's other military capabilities, which I imagine would become the focus of their defense

---

<sup>42</sup> Allan R Millett, "Korean War," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Britannica, May 29, 2019), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War>.

<sup>43</sup> Lowy Institute, "Japan - Lowy Institute Asia Power Index," Lowy Institute Asia Power Index 2021, 2023, <https://power.lowyinstitute.org/countries/japan/>.

policies, should North Korea continue with its hostile military showcases and China's encroachment on Taiwan.

Thus far, both countries have taken advantage of U.S.' deterrence umbrella, as long-time allies.<sup>44</sup> With the current administration, it would not be far-fetched to assume strained relationships between the allies, but complete severing of ties is again, highly unlikely, thus the two could continue to take advantage of American deterrence. Nonetheless, this again would not be a sign to prevent progress of militarization in the navy, air forces and standard army in both countries.

Furthermore, the development of nuclear weapons in both countries would represent a tantamount shift in geopolitics, not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but across the world. It is undeniable that the bombings of 1945 irrevocably changed the fabric of geopolitics, thus the sheer possession of such a weapon poses an increased risk of an already complicated security dilemma. Moreover, nuclear proliferation on their part would most certainly affect the established status quo in the region with the U.S. as a major security ally, who may decide that nuclear weapon ownership could lessen the need for an extended security deterrence. The weakening of U.S. allyship runs the risk of increased Chinese influence.

---

<sup>44</sup> John Grady, "State Dept. Official: U.S. Committed to Nuclear Defense of Japan, South Korea - USNI News," USNI News, April 25, 2024, <https://news.usni.org/2024/04/25/state-dept-official-u-s-committed-to-nuclear-defense-of-japan-south-korea>.

Note on footnotes: they are supposed to contain the link (source:  
[https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html))

## **Bibliography:**

Bernal, Gabriela . “‘If the Problem Becomes More Serious’: South Korea Talks Going Nuclear | Lowy Institute.” [www.loyyinstitute.org](http://www.loyyinstitute.org), January 18, 2023.

<https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/if-problem-becomes-more-serious-south-korea-talks-going-nuclear>.

Columbia Law School. “North Korea’s Nuclear Program: A History | Korean Legal Studies.” [kls.law.columbia.edu](http://kls.law.columbia.edu), 2024. <https://kls.law.columbia.edu/content/north-koreas-nuclear-program-history>.

Cordesman, Anthony H, and Ashley Hess. “The Evolving Military Balance in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia.” [Csis.org](http://Csis.org), 2026. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/evolving-military-balance-korean-peninsula-and-northeast-asia>.

EIA. “Five Countries Account for 71% of the World’s Nuclear Generation Capacity - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA),” 2025.

<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65904>.

EIA. “Japan’s Energy Policies Aim for Increased Zero-Carbon Electricity Generation - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA),” May 2, 2024.

<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61944>.

Emb-japan.go.jp. “Delegation of Japan to the CD: NPT,” 2016. [https://www.disarm.emb-japan.go.jp/NPT\\_info.html](https://www.disarm.emb-japan.go.jp/NPT_info.html).

Encyclopedia Britannica. “South Korea - the Yushin Order (Fourth Republic),” n.d.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Korea/The-Yushin-order-Fourth-Republic>

Fravel, M. Taylor, and Evan S. Medeiros. “China’s Search for Assured Retaliation: The Evolution of Chinese Nuclear Strategy and Force Structure.” *International Security* 35, no. 2 (October 2010): 48–87. [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00016](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00016).

Funaiolo, Matthew P, and Brian Hart. “China’s Military in 10 Charts.” [Csis.org](http://Csis.org), 2025.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-military-10-charts>.

Grady, John. “State Dept. Official: U.S. Committed to Nuclear Defense of Japan, South Korea - USNI News.” [USNI News](http://USNI News), April 25, 2024. <https://news.usni.org/2024/04/25/state-dept-official-u-s-committed-to-nuclear-defense-of-japan-south-korea>.

Guo, Peter, and Jay Ganglani. “China Seeks to Inflict Economic Blow on Japan amid Escalating Spat over Taiwan.” [NBC News](http://NBC News), November 19, 2025.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/world/asia/china-seeks-inflict-economic-blow-japan-escalating-spat-taiwan-rcna244555>.

Harsh Vaibhav. "Japan's Complicated Relationship with Nuclear Energy." Earth.org, March 25, 2026. <https://earth.org/japan-complicated-relationship-with-nuclear-energy/>.

Hughes, Llewelyn. "Why Japan Will Not Go Nuclear (Yet): International and Domestic Constraints on the Nuclearization of Japan." *International Security* 31, no. 4 (April 2007): 67–96. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2007.31.4.67>.

Hymans, Jacques E.C. "Veto Players, Nuclear Energy, and Nonproliferation: Domestic Institutional Barriers to a Japanese Bomb." *International Security* 36, no. 2 (2011): 154–89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41289701>.

IAEA. "PRIS - Reactor Status Reports - Operational & Long-Term Shutdown - by Country." pris.iaea.org, n.d.

<https://pris.iaea.org/PRIS/WorldStatistics/OperationalReactorsByCountry.aspx>.

IAEA. "The IAEA Mission Statement | IAEA." Iaea.org, May 26, 2014.

<https://www.iaea.org/about/mission>.

Institute, Lowy. "Japan - Lowy Institute Asia Power Index." Lowy Institute Asia Power Index 2021, 2023. <https://power.lowyinstitute.org/countries/japan/>.

International Atomic Energy Agency. "List of Member States | IAEA." Iaea.org, June 8, 2016. <https://www.iaea.org/about/governance/list-of-member-states>.

Iversen, Lindsay, Daniel B Poneman, and Clara Gillispie. "Japan's Energy Picture Fifteen Years Post-Fukushima." Cfr.org. Council on Foreign Relations, March 18, 2026.

<https://www.cfr.org/articles/japans-energy-picture-fifteen-years-post-fukushima>.

Jang, Se Young. "Bringing Seoul into the Non-Proliferation Regime | Wilson Center." www.wilsoncenter.org, September 20, 2017.

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/bringing-seoul-into-the-non-proliferation-regime>.

Kim, Hyung-Jin. "North Korea Launches Ballistic Missiles toward Sea." AP News, January 27, 2026. <https://apnews.com/article/north-south-korea-projectile-launched-9bb07a5ffb0782a27d0dbdf7b6871978>.

Kim, Ryeon-Woo, Cheongil Kim, Min-Kyu Kim, Hyomin Kim, and Ji-Bum Chung.

"Political Polarization and the Energy Policy Paradox: Assessing the Impact of South Korea's Nuclear Power Phase-out Policy." *Environmental Politics*, October 4, 2024, 1–24.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2024.2411933>.

Kim, Younghwan, Minki Kim, and Wonjoon Kim. "Effect of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster on Global Public Acceptance of Nuclear Energy." *Energy Policy* 61 (October 2013): 822–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2013.06.107>.

Lee, Taedong. "From Nuclear Energy Developmental State to Energy Transition in South Korea: The Role of the Political Epistemic Community." *Environmental Policy and Governance* 31, no. 2 (October 29, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1919>.

Lee, Yimou, Joe Cash, and Liz Lee. "China Encircles Taiwan in Massive Military Display." Reuters, December 30, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-launches-live-firing-drills-around-taiwan-its-biggest-war-games-date-2025-12-30/>.

McCurry, Justin. "Chinese Tourists Shun Japan over Lunar New Year Holiday as Rift Deepens." *the Guardian*. The Guardian, February 17, 2026.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/17/china-lunar-new-year-2026-chinese-tourists-shun-japan>.

Millett, Allan R. "Korean War." In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Britannica, May 29, 2019.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War>.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. "Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula View|Documents | North Korean Nuclear Issue Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea." Mofa.go.kr, 2013.

[https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5476/view.do?seq=305870&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=&page=6&titleNm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5476/view.do?seq=305870&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&page=6&titleNm=).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "MOFA: Three Non-Nuclear Principles," 2019.

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/>.

Ninivaggi, Gabriele. "Takaichi Stands Firm on Controversial Taiwan Contingency Remarks." *The Japan Times*, November 10, 2025.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/11/10/japan/politics/takaichi-taiwan/>.

Ninivaggi, Gabriele. "Takaichi's Taiwan Tumult: A Closer Look at the Japanese Leader's Contentious Remarks." *The Japan Times*, December 3, 2025.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/12/03/japan/explainer/explainer-japan-existential-crisis/>.

pris.iaea.org. "PRIS - Country Statistics," n.d.

<https://pris.iaea.org/PRIS/CountryStatistics/CountryStatisticsLandingPage.aspx>.

Simina Mistreanu. “China Restricts Exports to 40 Japanese Entities with Ties to Military.” AP News, February 24, 2026. <https://apnews.com/article/china-japan-export-controls-45b91393374ddaebcd6d381e51eefc12>.

Son, Sangyong, and Jong Hee Park. “Nonproliferation Information and Attitude Change: Evidence from South Korea.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September 16, 2022, 002200272211267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221126723>.

Stangarone, Troy. “Comparing Contexts: South Korea’s Potential Nuclear Armament in the 1970s & 2020s - Korea Economic Institute of America.” Korea Economic Institute of America, March 9, 2023. <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/comparing-contexts-south-koreas-potential-nuclear-armament-in-the-1970s-2020s/>.

METI. “Strategic Energy Plan,” 2025.

[https://www.enecho.meti.go.jp/category/others/basic\\_plan/pdf/2025\\_strategic\\_energy\\_plan.pdf](https://www.enecho.meti.go.jp/category/others/basic_plan/pdf/2025_strategic_energy_plan.pdf).

Unoda.org. “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) | United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs,” 2025. <https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/our-work/weapons-mass-destruction/nuclear-weapons/treaty-non-proliferation-nuclear-weapons>.

Valentine, Scott Victor, and Benjamin K Sovacool. “The Sociopolitical Economy of Nuclear Power Development in Japan and South Korea.” *Special Section: Carbon Reduction at Community Scale* 38, no. 12 (2010): 7971–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2010.09.036>.

World Nuclear Association. “Nuclear Power in Japan - World Nuclear Association.” world-nuclear.org, February 4, 2025. <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/japan-nuclear-power>.

World Nuclear Association. “Nuclear Power in South Korea - World Nuclear Association.” World-nuclear.org, 2025. <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-o-s/south-korea#history-of-the-nuclear-sector>.