**North Korea Script**

Hi. Good morning everybody. I hope you can hear me today. I've still got a bit of a cold. I can’t seem to shift it. I’ve had it for almost two months now. Hopefully I’ll get over it soon. Don't forget, as always, if you go to my home page: stevenaskew.com you can find the script for this talk and all my other talks. You can find questions. You can find sample answers and you can find the MP3 to download as well. If you subscribe, you can get these talks whenever I make them. And if you have any other ideas you'd like me to talk about, please put them in the comments below here. I'd love to have some feedback. Thank you.

All right. Today, we're going to talk about North Korea. Well, Korea and North Korea I suppose. Let’s look at the history first of all. So, the North Korean, well, the Korean Peninsula. Civilization … evidence of civilization … was … has been found there, dating from about ten thousand years ago. So, people have been living in that area for about ten millennia. Over time, those groups of people gradually grew together and formed larger and larger groups, as they did in most countries, until we had three main kingdoms. I'm not entirely sure if my pronunciation is right, but those three kingdoms were called Baekje, Silla and Goguryeo. Now, as again with most countries, those three kingdoms fought each other and each one was in control for a short period of time before losing to another one. But, over the years, gradually the Goguryeo Kingdom became the strongest. In about 900AD it shortened its name to Goryeo, and ended up ruling pretty much the entire Korean peninsula. For a while, it did move up into the Chinese area, but because of the deserts and the mountains it was too hard to rule, so they shrank back until pretty much the Korea we know today. The English word Korea, of course, comes from Goryeo. I believe it was brought back by Marco Polo, but I haven't researched that, so don't hold me to that.

The Goryeo Kingdom became stronger. A lot of things in Japan actually came across from Korea. Buddhism in Japan came from Korea, of course. Korea basically continued on its own, being influenced quite heavily by China, as most countries in the area were, until a few things happened. The two important things were the 1894 to 95 Sino Japanese war. That, of course, was Japan versus China. And then the 1904 Russo Japanese war, which, of course, was Japan against Russia. In the Meiji era Japan modernized. Japan rebuilt its army and became surprisingly powerful. And, when these two wars happened, most countries didn't think Japan would stand a chance, but Japan actually beat China and then beat Russia. The two wars meant, when China was defeated they had to withdraw their support from Korea, and when Russia was defeated as well, they had to withdraw their support from Korea, which left Korea basically open. And, in 1910, Japan annexed Korea. This was technically with Korean support, but, of course, there was no support.

From 1910 until 1945, when Japan surrendered, Japan controlled Korea. There were quite a few atrocities committed in Korea. A lot of Korean people were killed during the war, of course, both soldiers and civilians. Japan actually suppressed the Korean language. They made Korean people learn Japanese. They forced Korean people to have Japanese names, and a lot of things were done. Anyway, that's not the point of this talk. Surprisingly enough, many people don't know this but, when Hiroshima was bombed, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, a large number of the dead were actually Korean people. They were Koreans that were conscripted to work in the Japanese factories and because Hiroshima hadn't been bombed, it was a safe area, most of Japan's manufacturing was moved to that area. So, a large number of people that died there were actually Korean.

Anyway, 1945, Japan surrenders and of course, as you know, the Soviet Union takes control of the north and America takes control of the South. They divide this along the thirty eighth parallel, which is the 38th degree of latitude around the world. That's where they cut the north and south Koreas off. We talked about the atomic bomb a little bit earlier, but one reason why the Soviet Union didn't come into South Korea was because America had used this atomic bomb. One of the main reasons for them to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not to end the war, but to stop Russia from taking over that whole area. And, yet again, that's a talk for another day. So, when North and South Korea began it was relatively peaceful until the 28th of June 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. Both Koreas, of course, laid claim to the other side, but when North Korea invaded South Korea they were a communist country. They had the support of Communist Russia … the USSR: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and China. And, of course, South Korea defended and they had the support of America. The war lasted for about three years. 29th of July 1953 it finished. But of course, as you probably know, it didn't actually finish. There was a ceasefire, but the two Koreas are still at war today. There was no declaration of peace, there was no ending to the war, they just stopped shooting each other. During that war it was pretty horrific. About 900,000 soldiers died, most of those were on the North Korean side, and about 2.5 million civilians were killed. Again, most of those on the North Korean side. Some estimates say that 20% of the North Korean population was actually killed in this war.

A side point to this was that America actually considered using their atomic bombs during the war. After the Second World War, they’d moved, I think, six atomic bombs into England, to make most of Asia within reach. So, they could have bombed the Koreas. Of course, in 1949, the USSR had developed their own atomic bombs, so, if America had bombed Korea, it could have meant the end of the world. Who knows?

Anyway, so after the Korean War finished, the two Koreas became independent and they continued their own ways. North Korea was actually quite prosperous in the beginning. They had the support of China, they had the support of Russia, a lot of investment, and actually, until 1976, North Korea was more prosperous and was richer, it had a higher G.D.P. per capita than South Korea. But then, of course, a couple of things happened. Chairman Mao died in China. And Kim Il Sung, who was the head of North Korea, of course he didn't like that so he … he didn't like the new China, so he broke ties with China and that lost a lot of investment. And then, of course, the USSR collapsed in 1991. And, again, that stopped all Russian investment. So, until 1976 North Korea was very prosperous but then, after 1976 quite a few things happened, and South Korea took off. Right now, South Korea’s per capita G.D.P. is 40 times higher than that of North Korea, and we'll talk about that in a minute.

So, right now, North Korea and South Korea are divided along the thirty eighth parallel. You can go to the border zone. You can stand on one side. You can actually go into a room and stand in a room where there's a table, and this side of the table is South Korea, and that side of the table is North Korea. And you can look into North Korea, and North Korea has built a city very close to the border to show how prosperous North Korea is. But, of course, if you look at the city with a telescope, you can see that it's actually a fake city. There's nobody living there, it's just a fake city. And this is one of the things that we'll talk about with North Korea, possibly: How important appearances are to them. How they need to appear to be wealthy and prosperous and successful and powerful, when in fact it's all for show, basically. So, after the Korean War, Kim Il Sung takes control. He was a war hero. He fought the Japanese during the Second World War. He was a war hero and he became president, basically. He lived from 1912 until 1994 and his idea was that Korea should be …North Korea sorry, should be completely self-sufficient. So, he withdrew as much as possible from China and from Russia. He thought everything should be made, manufactured, grown, developed within North Korea. As we can see that wasn't a very successful idea, but that was the beginning of the North Korean philosophy. He also created the cult of personality which his son, Kim Jong Il built on. Kim Jong Il obviously took over when his father died in 1994. Kim Jong Il was a very important figure in the development of North Korea. He believed in military first. He believed in military might and he directed most of North Korea's G.D.P., I think it's about 25% of their G.D.P., towards the military. North Korea has one of the largest standing armies in the world because pretty much everybody is in the army. He did that for a number of reasons. One reason was to cement control over the country. He wanted to stop coups, and if you can control the military you can generally control the country. But, he also built on the god status, the cult of personality. He spread many myths about himself. You might have heard some of them. He said that he was born on a mountain. Well, you’ve heard many of the stories, I’m sure. And, basically, setting himself up as a god. He wants to be more than a person, he wants to be a god. And, what he did is, he made his father the Eternal General … sorry … he made his father the Eternal President, and when Kim Jong Il died he became the Eternal General Secretary. But, more than that, to the people of North Korea they are gods. There are statues and pictures of them everywhere. If you see a statue of the founding fathers, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, you must stop, you must bow, you must pay your respects. If you take a photograph, the whole of the statue must be in the photograph. You have to pay your respects. And you can see this in pictures where people are meeting the Supreme Leader and they're crying and they’re screaming. They're basically meeting their God, I should say. So, during Kim Jong Il's reign, there were quite a few problems because he directed most of the G.D.P. towards the military, the economy basically suffered. In the 1990s there were severe floods, there were severe droughts and there are … were huge huge famines. Millions of people actually starved to death. In the end the U.N. had to send aid in to help. Although a lot of that aid was stolen and redirected.

Anyway, 2011, Kim Jong Il died and he has been replaced by his son Kim Jong Un. Kim Jong Un was Kim Jong Il’s son from one of his four wives. He had many wives. Kim Jong Un became leader in 2011. He is the Supreme Leader. He cemented his control. He was very young when he took power, he took control by executing a large number of opponents, as you probably saw in the news.

Anyway, that brings us up to the modern day. So, Kim Jong Un is building on the cult of personality. He's building on the god status. He travels around his country, travels around his factories …. Sorry … And you probably see him in pictures surrounded by his subordinates, surrounded by soldiers, and all of these subordinates have a notebook in their hand. This started with his father, but, basically, because Kim Jong Un is a god, everything he says is important. Everything he says is correct and important and must be written down. So, all of his subordinates are there with notebooks writing down everything he says. If you don't have a notebook of course, you're probably going to get punished. So, everybody has a notebook. Of course, if what he says is wrong, you don't write it down. Anyway, that's why in all the pictures you see his subordinates carrying around notebooks.

Ok. So, as you probably know, North Korea is a fairly corrupt regime. Kim Jong UN has 17 mansions. He has a yacht. He has a ski resort. He spends about $63,000 a year on brandy. The average salary in North Korea is about $804 a year. He spends over $100,000 a year on alcohol, on expensive alcohols. In 2012, he spent about $645 million on luxury goods. Since he took control, his weight has blossomed, bloomed, exploded. He's now estimated to be about 130kg. If you look at pictures of him in the beginning, he was never actually thin, but now he's huge and he wears long coats to try and disguise that. The North Korean economy is suffering, is collapsing. If you look at a global map at night you can very clearly see Japan over here very brightly lit, China up here brightly lit, South Korea brightly lit, North Korea completely dark. Pyongyang, the capital is slightly bright, but the rest of North Korea is completely black. Why? Because there is no electricity. People are starving. The communist regime, they take food from the people. There is famine. There’s drought. The people are basically starving. And while they’re starving, Kim Jong Un gets fatter and fatter. And there are sanctions. Very strong sanctions have been placed upon North Korea recently because they won't give up their nuclear weapons program. So, at the expense of his people, Kim Jong Un is continuing in this stubborn attempt to build nuclear weapons. If he was going hungry with his people, if he was fighting with his people against the oppressors, you could understand it, but he's obviously not. He's doing this at the expense of his people. He doesn't seem to care about his people.

So, what's going to happen to North Korea? I have no idea, but it will probably collapse at some point. However, China and North Korea want to prevent that as much as possible. Recently, the strongest sanctions have been placed upon North Korea, but China is always the one that wants to help North Korea. Why is that? Well basically, because America has military bases in South Korea and in Japan. North Korea is a buffer zone between South Korea and China. If Korea was to collapse … North Korea was to collapse, and become one with South Korea, then the U.S. military would be right on the border of China, and obviously China doesn't want that. So, China wants to prop up the North Korean regime as much as possible to try and stop America coming close to them. South Korea doesn't not want North Korea to collapse, but South Korea cannot afford North Korea to collapse. If you look at 1990, 1991, when East and West Germany combined … unified, what happened to begin with? The poor East Germans flooded into rich West Germany and the West German economy collapsed for a long time. But, now, if you look at Europe, Germany, unified Germany, is one of the richest countries in Europe. Well that's because of course they have more people, they have more laborers, they have more work, they have a lot of benefits. South Korea and North Korea will not survive as easily as East Germany and West Germany did. One reason for that is because the population of North Korea is higher than the population of East Germany was. Another reason is the mean income was higher. East Germans had on average about $10,000 apiece. North Koreans have about a $1,000 apiece. So, when North and South Korea combine, the hit to South Korea is going to be enormous, and their economy is going to collapse. America will probably help and support them, Japan might, too, but it is going to be a huge problem for their economy. They will probably come through it, but it will take a long long time. So, those are two reasons why China and South Korea don't want the North Korean regime to collapse. However, regime change is probably inevitable. Something will have to happen. I don't know what.

Anyway, that was quite interesting. Thanks for watching. If you have any topics you'd like me to talk about put them in the comments down there somewhere. If you want to subscribe, the button’s about here. Thank you. Next week will be about the Wright brothers, I think. Anyway, see you then. Bye.

**North Korea Questions**

1. People have been living on the Korean Peninsular for ten millennia. How long is a millennium?

A: 10 years

B: 100 years

C: 1,000 years

D: 10,000 years

2. “In 1910 Japan annexed Korea.” Which of these words is closest in meaning to “annexed”?

A: procured

B: dispersed

C: scattered

D: surrendered

3. Why were many Koreans killed in Hiroshima?

A: they were studying there

B: they were fighting in the war there

C: they were working in factories there

D: they were trying to stop Russia

4. Which of these statements about the Korean War is INCORRECT?

A: The war completely finished in 1953.

B: North Korea was supported by China and the USSR.

C: 2.5 million civilians were killed.

D: America considered using atomic bombs.

5. How many times higher is South Korea’s G.D.P. than North Korea’s?

A: 4 times

B: 14 times

C: 40 times

D: 44 times

6. Why have North Korea built a fake city on their side of the border?

A: They are trying to build as much as they can.

B: They are scared that South Korea will invade.

C: They want a place for people to live in that is close to the border.

D: They want to appear wealthier than they are.

7. What two ideas did Kim Il Sung introduce to North Korea?

A: The building of the military and the withdrawal from China.

B: The building of factories and the connection to Russia

C: The policy of self-sufficiency and the cult of personality.

D: The development of farms and the treatment of war heroes.

8. What did Kim Jong Il believe was most important?

A: The military

B: The factories

C: The people

D: The workers

9. What does the global map at night show?

A: There is no way to take a perfect map of the world at night.

B: There is very little electricity in North Korea.

C: North Korea is brighter than countries like Japan.

D: North Korea sells electricity to China.

10. Why does China want to stop North Korea collapsing?

A: To hold off East and West Germany

B: To bring more prosperity to North Korea

C: To stop the South Korean economy from suffering

D: To keep the American army away

11. What would be the effect on the world if North Korea collapsed?

12. What is a cult of personality?

13. Steven says that Kim Jong Un’s actions in relation to the sanctions are hypocritical. Can you explain why?

14. Days are numbered for dictatorships like North Korea. Do you agree or disagree? State your reasons.

15. North Korea intends to fire a nuclear weapon at America. Do you agree? State your reasons.

**North Korea Questions Answers**

1. C 2. A 3. C 4. A 5. C 6. D 7. C 8. A 9. B 10. D

11. What would be the effect on the world if North Korea collapsed?

The effect on the world would be great. It would probably be most noticed in global security and the global economy.

Obviously, if North Korea and South Korea became one, the fear of a North Korean attack that is hanging over the world at the moment would disappear. The new, unified Korea would be far more peaceful, and would be interested in increasing its economy and wealth. The threat of the nuclear weapons that North Korea currently possess falling into terrorist hands would exist, but it would be no more so than when the USSR collapsed. As a whole, the world would breathe a collective sigh of relief.

The unifying of the two Koreas would be felt much more in the global economy. The feeling of security around the world would encourage people to trade on a higher level than before. However, more than that, the new Korea will almost fail economically. It will require large amounts of investment. This will come from countries such as the USA, Japan and China, but also from companies wishing to have branches in the new country. This investment on such a massive scale will strengthen the world’s economy and produce a boom that washes down through many levels.

12. What is a cult of personality?

A cult of personality is where the leader of a country takes on such mythical characteristics that they become worshipped, as a god. The whole country’s identity becomes tied up in that of its leader. The leader takes on such a godlike state that they become the country. Adolf Hitler would be a good example. When he took absolute power in August 1934, he became more than a man to his supporters. Using the media and the spreading of stories, he managed to make himself into a mythical figure descended from the skies. If you watch Leni Riefenstahl’s Triumph of the Will, from 1935, you can see this. All of her imagery portrays Hitler as a god come down to Earth. Hitler introduced the “fuhrerprinzip”, the idea that his word was above the law. And, North Korea exists in a similar way. Through careful spreading of myths, total control of the media and the internment and execution of opposition, Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un have created a country where the main goal for the average person is to please the “Supreme Leader”. It can be as hard to bring down a regime that has its basis in the cult of personality as it would be to bring down a religion. Of course, if you were to try to bring down this regime, you would find that soldiers who fight for a god-leader are far more likely to fight to the death. An example of this could be Japanese soldiers in the Second World War.

13. Steven implies that Kim Jong Un’s actions in relation to the sanctions are hypocritical. Can you explain why?

Kim Jong Un has said that no matter what sanctions are leveled against his country, the North Koreans will not cease in their quest to build a workable hydrogen bomb. He has said that even if all of the food is cut off, his country will not give up. He has also blamed the countries imposing the sanctions of killing all of his people. However, during all of the famines, droughts and sanctions, Kim Jong Un has gradually grown fatter. He spends a fortune on luxurious foods and drink. He is not suffering. So, Steven is implying Kim Jong Un is hypocritical because he grows fatter while his people starve, and yet says they will never give up.

14. Days are numbered for dictatorships like North Korea. Do you agree or disagree? State your reasons.

I agree, but with a caveat. The trend of countries since the end of the Second World War has been a move towards peace and democracy, however, there are some powerful countries that are actually dictatorships masquerading as republics.

The spread of information is the main reason why the number of dictatorships is decreasing. There are two parts to this. The first part is that technology is becoming cheaper and more people than ever have smartphones and access to the Internet. It is hard for a dictatorship to stay in power unless they can control the flow of information. China is doing its best, but its Great Firewall cannot last forever. Information will find a way to spread. The second part to this argument is the ease with which information flows around the world. A dictatorship doesn’t just need to hide its actions from its people, but also from the rest of the world. Once other countries become aware of a dictatorship’s actions, intervention or sanctions become highly probable.

However, some countries, such as Russia, are actually dictatorships pretending to be democracies. Russia holds elections, but they are never contested fairly. Power is held in the hands of a few people who are paid off by being put in charge of selling the country’s vast resources. They in turn pay money back to the president, who is estimated to be one of the richest people in the world. And all the while, the country falls apart.

15. North Korea intends to fire a nuclear weapon at America. Do you agree? State your reasons.

No, North Korea doesn’t intend to fire a nuclear weapon at America. They want to build one, believing it will give them more negotiating power and more international respect, but they would never be stupid enough to actually use it. Right now, they have the protection of China. Were they to bomb America, that protection would disappear very quickly, and regime change in North Korea would happen very quickly. This can be seen by looking at the paths of the last two long range missiles fired by North Korea. Both of them were fired over Japan, but they were directed over the narrowest part of Japan. They were above land for the shortest time possible. Kim Jong Un wants to make a statement, but he also wants to make sure the missiles will not strike land if there is a malfunction. He knows that the consequences would be more than his regime could handle.

Whether or not possessing a nuclear weapon will do anything for the North Korean regime will have to be seen. I would guess that it would not. To reduce sanctions and reintroduce trade would be to admit that North Korea had won and America deals with any country that has nuclear weapons.