



North Korean Nuclear Weapons Argumentative Writing Assessment

Introduction

On July 4th – not coincidentally, American Independence Day – North Korea successfully tested an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM), a rocket with a range of about 5,000 kilometers and able to reach far into the American mainland, perhaps as far as Chicago. Eleven years previously, in 2006, North Korea successfully tested its first nuclear warhead. In the intervening years North Korea made a full-bore national commitment to building additional and even more powerful nuclear weapons, and developing a delivery system that can reach the country it calls its greatest enemy, the United States. This past summer, North Korea announced and appeared to prove to the world that it is a current threat to incinerate the major cities of the U.S.A., a threat status that came about much more quickly than any Western military experts predicted.

The Korean War of 1950 – 1953 divided the Korean Peninsula into the Western-allied South, with its capitol in Seoul, only 40 miles from the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in the middle, and the Communist North, with its capitol in Pyongyang. Ever since then, North Korea – which never signed an official end to its fighting against the U.S. in 1953 and considers itself at war even today – has pledged its violent hatred of and enmity toward America, along with its intention of reuniting the Koreans under its leadership (even though its population is only one-eighth, and its economy one-hundredth, the size of the South's). Given this geopolitical situation, a nuclear armed North Korea is causing a great deal of concern and anxiety, not only in average Americans but in foreign policy and military experts of all stripes.

President Barack Obama told Donald Trump, on the day of his Inauguration, that the emerging crisis being caused by North Korea’s obtaining nuclear weapons that are increasingly powerful and able to reach the United States, is our country’s single greatest foreign policy threat. Those words are being born out, and experts and policy-makers are now trying to determine what should be done to respond to the challenge of North Korea, that has emerged as a crisis of the present rather than the future. There are many positions that have been advanced in this debate, but – in addition to the general consensus that there are no easy answers – two poles on a continuum in the argumentation have become clear.

One pole argues that the United States must remove the capacity that North Korea has to attack the U.S. with nuclear weapons, including if necessary the use of military force. The supporters of this position believe that the American military will likely either have to “surgically strike” North Korean nuclear missile sites, or perform a full-scale invasion of the country to overthrow the current regime of Kim Jung-un (North Korea’s dynastic “supreme leader”). The other pole argues that the United States should accept that North Korea is now the world’s ninth nation to possess nuclear weapons, and that we should attempt to “contain and deter” Pyongyang. The objective of this policy is to try to limit the size of the north’s nuclear arsenal and make the country too afraid of our overwhelming response to use nuclear weapons against us or our allies in southeast Asia.

Issue

Should the United States contain and deter North Korea as a nuclear power, or should it use whatever means necessary, including military force, to eliminate its ability to threaten the U.S. with nuclear weapons?

Directions

Carefully read and annotate the attached set of secondary-source document excerpts. Use information from at least four of the sources in a coherent, well-developed essay that has an introduction, argumentative body, and conclusion. Your essay should take a clear position, stated in a thesis, on the issue. Your thesis should be supported and developed by 2 – 3 arguments. Each argument should have a claim, evidence, and reasoning, using one or two pieces of evidence from



the set of sources. You should also address and refute at least one counter-argument, either in a separate paragraph or in your argument paragraphs.

Use the set of sources to identify evidence that will support your claims, and supply your own reasoning to explain how it is that each piece of evidence proves that your claim and your overall position are true. Avoid merely summarizing sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation or paraphrase. Cite sources either by their letter (A – H) or (even better) by their author, emphasizing qualifications where appropriate.