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## **Decades of incidents between the two Koreas**

The Korean Peninsula is perhaps the last part of the World, where the Cold War hasn't ended yet, and is still going on. The barrack complex of Panmunjeom with North and South Korean soldiers standing face to face is a surrealistic symbol of this continuing standoff. News about severe military incidents along the armistice line, and mutual threats between the two Koreas regularly appear in the news even these days. But it is rarely realized, that the series of incidents has been constantly going on ever since the end of the Korean War in 1953, including a wide range of different incidents, from traditional direct military clashes along the armistice line, to incursions by special forces, and surrealistic incidents, such as kidnappings and tunnels across the border. My lecture attempts to give an overview on the decades of incidents from the end of the Korean War until now.

To enable us to understand the nature of this conflict, at first we have to take a short overview on the special international status of North Korea. In Europe, most communist countries were the satellites of the Soviet Union. If North Korea was the satellite of either the Soviet Union or China, then the orthodox character of the Pyongyang regime would have been undermined either by the collapse of the Eastern Block or by the Chinese reforms. The survival of the Pyongyang regime is the consequence of the uniquely independent international status of North Korea between China and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Such degree of independence was rare among Communist countries of the size of North Korea (population today: 23 million inhabitants). The fact that Pyongyang managed to avoid satellite status is especially unusual regarding the fact that unlike communist countries with a similar degree of independence (Yugoslavia, Albania, Cuba or Vietnam) the entire area of North Korea has experienced occupation once by USSR and once by PRC troops between 1945 and 1958. The most intensive period of incidents was the „Second Korean War”, one of the major forgotten conflicts of the Cold War. The ten years between 1966-1976, could be described as the zenith of Communist power in Asia. These were the years of the Cultural Revolution in China, the most intensive part of the war in Vietnam, as well as the beginning of Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia. Taking inspiration from this dynamism, during these ten years North Korea unsuccessfully attempted to trigger a large scale communist guerilla war in the South, similar to that of the „Vietcong” in South Vietnam. The Pyongyang regime hoped to ignite such a guerilla war by a series of incursions of special forces into the South.

Later, the 1980s were marked by bomb attacks of North Korean agents both in South Korea, and on South Korean facilities in other parts of the world.

Two bizarre kinds of North Korean activity were digging military tunnels under the armistice line into South Korean territory, and kidnapping of Japanese and South Korean citizens for purposes largely still unknown to us.

During the 1990s and the 2000s, naval incidents have again and again shown us that the conflict is still going on.