

Research report
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Non-proliferation / DPRK
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Introduction

In August 1942, the Manhattan Project was established in the United States. On the 6th of August 1945, the United States detonates a uranium bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing more than 140,000 people within months. It took the UN General Assembly till the 24th of January 1946 to first call for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and to set up a commission to deal with the problem of the atomic discovery. In the decades to follow, however, more and more nuclear activity could not be prevented.

One of the biggest issues nowadays concerning nuclear weapons is the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). This country has been conducting nuclear tests since October 2006, and the tests have become more dangerous ever since. Despite heavy condemnation from the international community, North Korea has increased its amount of (nuclear) missiles and is not showing any signs of seizing its activities soon, which may lead to devastating situations.

Definition of Key Terms

Non-proliferation: Controlling the spread and/or amount of something, mainly nuclear or chemical weapons. The DPRK has built a large nuclear programme over the years, which the international community is determined to contain, and ultimately shut down completely.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was opened for signature in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, with 191 countries having joined so far. The treaty's main objectives are to "prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament."

There are five countries that possess nuclear weapons and have joined the Treaty, these are the nuclear-weapon states. Three other countries have not joined the Treaty, yet do possess nuclear weapons, these are India, Pakistan and North Korea. The NPT has not designated these countries as nuclear-weapon states.

Domino theory: A theory in which is believed that if one nation is turned communist, the surrounding nations are at severe risk of also turning communist. The United States of America interfered in the Korean War due to this belief. It wanted to prevent the Soviet Union from spreading its communist beliefs to the south of Korea as it had already done in the north.

Juche Ideology: The term Juche is often described as "self-reliance", meaning that the nation depends on only itself to produce necessities such as food. The leader of the DPRK Kim Il-sung (1972-94) remodeled the nation according to this idea. The DPRK claims that it is Kim Il-Sung's creative use of the traditional marxist ideology.

Sunshine Policy: The sunshine policy is the policy that emphasized peaceful cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK. However, this policy has been abandoned by president Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in 2010.

South Korea-US missile defence deal: The agreement to deploy a highly advanced American missile defence system (also known as Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or Thaad for short) in the south of Republic of Korea. This defence system set up to better protect the Republic of Korea, in addition to possible US military in the area. However there have been strong protests from China. The Chinese foreign ministry stated that the defence system would undermine China's security.¹

General Overview

August 6th and August 9th 1945 marked the beginning of the age of nuclear weapons. Without knowing it, the United States started a new age for warfare as well. Producing and acquiring certain types of weapons was not seen as a threat ever before in history. By the end of the 1950's, almost 15 years after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, The International Atomic Energy Agency came into existence with the mission of promoting and overseeing the peaceful use of nuclear technology (see timeline for further elaboration). As the years went on, more and more focus was put on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. With the entering into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a new chapter of preventing the spread and/or use of nuclear weapons and weapons technology was started in 1970. As required by the text, all parties met in May 1995 and agreed to extend the treaty indefinitely.

North Korea; a short overview

North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (abbreviated DPRK), is a country in East Asia constituting the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. At the end of World War II, Korea was divided into two zones, with the north occupied by the Soviets and the south by the Americans. Negotiations on reunifications failed and in 1948 separate governments were formed. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea became a socialist country; the Republic of Korea followed a rather right-wing government. An invasion initiated by North Korea led to the Korean War (1950-1953), which was supported by the Sovjet-Union, believing that the United States would not intervene.

Unexpectedly, the United States did intervene due to its stern belief in the so-called 'domino theory'. This states that if the United States did not interfere in this conflict, all Asian nations would turn communist. The United Nations Security Council firmly believed that the DPRK had broken the peace, allowing the United States to intervene. After a peace treaty was signed, a heavy guarded demilitarized zone divided the peninsula, which is located on the 38th parallel².

Following this conflict, the leader of the DPRK Kim Il-Sung (1972-'94) remodelled the nation according to the Juche idea. Until this day the country is a one-party republic, in addition to being a self-described revolutionary and socialist state and is one of the few countries still under a socialist regime. The Kim family has been ruling North Korea for decades, its current supreme leader being Kim Jong-un.



¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/08/world/asia/south-korea-and-us-agree-to-deploy-missile-defense-system.html>

² http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/coldwar/korea_hickey_01.shtml

Upon the death of his father, Kim Jong-un assumed power in December 2011. Under Kim Jong-un's authority, North Korea has continued what are believed to be weapons testing programs. Though agreeing in February 2012 to halt nuclear testing and to a cessation on long-range missile launching, in April 2012 the country launched a satellite that failed shortly after take off. Shortly after a new South Korea-US missile defence deal, a more successful satellite launch took place in December 2012. This suggested the development of nuclear weapons, able to hit the United States mainland. In February 2013 a third nuclear test was executed, resulting in further United Nations Security Council sanctions. Additional tests were performed in 2014, however the DPRK offered to restart peace talks, if UN sanctions were dropped³. Nonetheless, the Security Council has not shown willingness to drop the sanctions against The DPRK, on the contrary, the Republic of Korea continues to encourage the United Nations to toughen sanctions in response to the DPRK's nuclear programme. The DPRK further claims that it has so far conducted six successful nuclear tests up to date, the most recent one in September 2016, which has been claimed as being the strongest one yet. The former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has warned about the DPRK's nuclear bombs and ballistic missiles creating tension in the region.

In addition to an active nuclear programme, the DPRK manages one of the world's largest standing armies. The Korean People's Army was established in February 1948. Militarism is apart of everyday life, although discipline, as well as equipment has been reported to be low. Up to this day, the soldiers of the Korean People's Army are equipped with Soviet weapons from the Cold War era.

The DPRK is one of the world's top violators of human rights. The population of the DPRK has been mistreated for decades, even though the international community highly condemns these acts. The citizens of the DPRK lack freedom of speech. Domestic media is run by the state and is under strict supervision and censorship.¹³ This censorship highly limits the amount of information the population of the DPRK can get from abroad, its goal being to shape the beliefs of the citizens into the wanted form. However extreme censorship has not been as effective as hoped since many are determined to leave the country even though the freedom of movement is also restricted.

Due to the *juche* ideology of self-reliance, the nation faces chronic food shortages. No food can be imported into the DPRK, although its agricultural policies are failing, in addition to the climate conditions not being optimal for crops to be grown.

The DPRK further violates basic human rights with its political prison camps. The camps hold and estimate of 80,000 to 120,000 people, including children. The population within the camps live in harsh conditions, facing torture, starvation, forced labour, rape and execution. Illnesses are common due to the unsanitary conditions.

Recent events

In the last months, non-proliferation has been a 'hot topic'. With the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, or the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty, a big step has been set towards a peaceful use of nuclear weapons. The treaty will go into force 90 days after the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession has been deposited. The treaty passed with 122 votes in favour, 1 vote against and 1 abstained. However, 69 nations did not vote, among them all the Nuclear Weapon States and all the NATO members, except the Netherlands. The treaty is believed that it will help "stigmatize" nuclear weapons, and serve as a "catalyst" for elimination⁴. Nuclear weapons – unlike

³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15258878>

⁴ Reaching Critical Will and Article 36, "[A treaty banning nuclear weapons](#)" (May 2014)

chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions – weren't prohibited in a comprehensive and universal manner⁵. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) contains only partial prohibitions, and nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties prohibit nuclear weapons only within certain geographical regions.

Major parties involved

Japan

Japan is worried about the DPRK's missiles potentially reaching Japanese mainland and has invested approximately 12 billion US dollars to create its own ballistic missile programme meant for self-defence. In addition, Japan is concerned about the abduction of its citizens by the DPRK and views the Six-Party Talks as an outlet for expressing their concerns. However Japan has gradually lost its power of influencing the Korean Peninsula through the negotiations, thus having to bring out its interests through collaboration with the US and Republic of Korea.

United States of America

The United States has been an active member in negotiations with the DPRK. It has offered food-aid in exchange for the end of the DPRK's nuclear programme multiple times, however without progress. It also has a variety of military bases in the Republic of Korea, especially near the border.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The DPRK is continuously breaking international treaties, as well as laws, due to its passion for its nuclear programme. The DPRK's unwillingness to cooperate with the international community has led to a number of sanctions placed by the United Nations. However it faces a variety of dilemmas, for instance, famine caused by natural disasters and ineffective agricultural policies. The DPRK refuses to import food, seeing the Juche ideology of self-reliance.

Republic of Korea

Park Geun-hye, the former president of the Republic of Korea, maintained a tough line towards the DPRK regime. The Republic of Korea has put in a lot of effort in the hope of the DPRK abandoning its nuclear programme once and for all, in addition to possible reunification in the future. However these efforts have not produced any lasting results in the warming of relations between the two.

China

China has been the DPRK's main trading partner and only ally, which is why its reactions to the actions of the DPRK are often closely watched. Though it has been the DPRK's ally, it condemned the 2016 nuclear tests along with the rest of the international community. It has gradually distanced itself from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, due to the increasing frustration and embarrassment of Chinese leaders, because of the DPRK's inflexibility over its nuclear programme.

Russian Federation

In the past the Russian Federation has had a fairly friendly relationship with the DPRK, however it is forced to choose between the DPRK, and its strategic partner, the United States.

⁵ Article 36 and Reaching Critical Will, "[Filling the legal gap: the prohibition of nuclear weapons](#)" (April 2015)

Like China, the Russian Federation has started to distance itself from the DPRK, due to the DPRK's continuous disputes with the international community.

Timeline of Key Events

1985 - The DPRK joins the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, preventing it from producing nuclear weapons.

1991 - The DPRK joins the United Nations

1993 - International Atomic Energy Agency accuses the DPRK of violating the NTP. The DPRK threatens to quit the treaty.

1993 - The DPRK test fires a medium-range Rodong ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan.

1994 July - The first supreme leader and eternal president Kim Il-sung dies. His son Kim Jong-il becomes the successor.

1994 October - The DPRK and the US sign an Agreed Framework, under which the DPRK commits to ceasing its nuclear programme, in return for fuel oil and two light-water nuclear reactors.

1998 August - The DPRK fires a multistage long range rocket well beyond The DPRK's then known capability. **2002 January** - Former president of the United states George W. Bush calls the DPRK, Iraq and Iran an "axis of evil" for continuing to build "weapons of mass destruction".

2002 October - The US and its important allies in Asia, Japan and South Korea stop oil shipments, following the DPRK's reported confirmation, that it has secretly been developing a uranium based nuclear programme.

2002 December - The DPRK announces that it is officially reactivating nuclear facilities in Yongbyon.

2003 January - The DPRK withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, marking the beginning of the Six-Party Talks.

2003 May - The DPRK withdraws from 1992 agreement with South Korea to keep the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

2005 February - The DPRK admits publicly that it has produced nuclear weapons. It states that the weaponry is for "self defence".

2006 July - The DPRK test fires seven missiles including a long-range missile. Despite the high expectations of the missile hitting US mainland, it crashes shortly after take-off.

2006 October - DPRK conducts its first nuclear weapons test at an underground facility. The UN decides to impose economic and commercial sanctions on the DPRK, in order to pressure it to cease its nuclear programme.

2008 October - The DPRK agrees to provide full access to Yongbyon nuclear site after US removes it from its blacklist for terrorism. The DPRK launches a long-range rocket, carrying what is stated to be a communications satellite, however its neighbours accuse it of testing long-range missile technology. Condemnation from the UN Security Council prompts the DPRK to walk out of SixParty Talks and restart its nuclear facilities.

2009 May - the DPRK carries out its second underground nuclear test. UN Security Council once again condemns this act.

2011 December - Death of supreme leader Kim Jong-il. Kim Jong-un takes over his father's position.

2012 April - Another failure of a test launch. The missile launch is internationally viewed as a banned test of the long-range Taepodong-2 missile technology. The DPRK claims that their aim was to put a satellite into orbit to mark the 100th birthday of Kim Il-sung.

2012 October - The DPRK claims it has missiles than can hit the US mainland after South Korea and Washington announce a deal to extend the range of South Korea's ballistic missiles.

2012 December - The DPRK successfully launches a satellite mounted on a rocket into orbit, after the failed attempt in April.

2013 February - UN approves new sanctions after the DPRK stages its third nuclear test, that is said to be more powerful than the test launch in 2009.

2013 September - China, the only ally of the DPRK, bans the exportation of items that could be used to make missiles or nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

2015 September - The DPRK confirms it has put its Yongbyon nuclear plant, that has been unused since 2007, back into operation.

2016 January - The DPRK government announcement of the first hydrogen bomb test. The announcement was met with widespread scepticism around the international community.

2016 September - The DPRK carries out its fifth and reportedly biggest nuclear test.

UN Documents and Resolutions

S/RES/1718 (2006), Imposition of an arms embargo, assets freeze and travel ban on persons involved in the DPRK's nuclear programme. Also bans a range of imports and exports, to prohibit the DPRK from conducting nuclear tests or launching ballistic missiles:
[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1718%20%282006%29 21](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1718%20%282006%29%2021)
[https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/s/res/1718-\(2006\)](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/s/res/1718-(2006))

Security Council Resolution 1874 (2009), Strengthens arms embargo and calls for inspection of cargo, going to the DPRK:22

http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asiapaci/n_korea/nuclear/unsc_resolution1874.pdf

2 MARCH 2016 S/RES/2270, A resolution condemning the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 6 January 2016, in addition to its ballistic missile launch of 7 February 2016. The resolution demands that the DPRK complies with its international obligations immediately:
http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2270.pdf

16 APRIL 2012 S/PRST/2012/13, A statement strongly condemning the DPRK's missile launch as a serious violation of resolutions 1718 and 1874. The statement directs the committee to take steps to update and strengthen the sanctions aimed towards the DPRK, and expressed determination to act in the event of another DPRK launch or nuclear test:
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/NKorea%20S%202012%2013.pdf>

13 APRIL 2009 S/PRST/2009/7, A statement from the President of the Security Council, condemning the 5 April launch of a rocket by the DPRK, saying it was in contravention of resolution 1718:

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/NKorea%20SPRST%2020097.pdf>

Possible solutions

Previously the nations involved in Six-Party Talks have tried to solve the issue through military cooperation, and an assortment of sanctions and export controls. Many treaties, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, have been signed by the DPRK, however they have not been followed. The DPRK has still not responded in the wanted manner to the pressure put by the international community.

Thus far the removal of sanctions has not worked in making the DPRK friendlier towards the international community. However, by seriously increasing them, China can be forced to part with the DPRK, if the nations still wants to do business with the rest of the international community. Forcing China to part with the DPRK should not be very difficult, since the relations between the two nations have already started to weaken, due to the China's important trading partners condemning it. With these sanctions, the DPRK could lose its sole ally, without whom it won't be able to get many needed resources for its nuclear programme, forcing the DPRK to discontinue it.

In addition to sanctions, the DPRK should be pressured to cease its nuclear programme through negotiations. Restarting the Six-Party Talks would be one option, however the DPRK should first be pressured to return to the negotiations. This can be done through, for example, the sanctions. China is key here also. By losing its only ally DPRK would be more likely to be willing to negotiate.

These sanctions, nonetheless, will have negative effects on the citizens of the DPRK. The amount of refugees from the region will very likely increase. These refugees should be attended to. The DPRK has made it illegal to leave the country without state permission. If caught crossing the border, or if caught in China and sent back, the citizens will face a series of harsh punishments, including beating and forced labour. Thus the refugees from the DPRK should be protected by international refugee law. Until this day, the Chinese government prioritises its political relationship with the DPRK and does not recognise the people escaping from the DPRK as refugees.²⁷ This problem would be solved if China could be pressured enough to part with its alliance with the DPRK.

Keeping in mind the constant threat coming out of the current DPRK leadership, more recently directed towards the United States and their military camps in the region, another option could prove viable. A pre-emptive strike could prove a viable option to disarm the constant threat towards international peace. However, acquiring intelligence from the region has proven to be close to impossible. Even though professionals say that the DPRK isn't capable of arming a nuclear missile towards the soil of the United States, projections are that they will be able to do so in years⁶. A pre-emptive strike would most probably prevent the DPRK of starting a nuclear war with humanitarian devastation we haven't seen for a long time, but odds are that it 'will be a war more serious in terms of human suffering than anything we've seen since 1953', according to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis⁷.

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⁶ <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2017/07/06/pre-emptive-us-strike-on-north-korea-could-be-catastrophic/>

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