

North Korea and the Great Powers: The United Nations' Sanctions and the Balance of Power in Northeast Asia

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Executive Summary

The North Korean nuclear file is an old one on the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) agenda. Every year brings new provocative actions on the part of North Korea. The United Nations (UN) sanctions seem inadequate to resolve North Korea's nuclear proliferation, inclusively because of the great powers' rivalries in the UNSC and in Northeast Asia.

The central argument of this paper is that North Korea's nuclear non-proliferation cannot be assured only with measures and procedures. The great powers should agree on a common strategy regarding North Korea, and the future of the Korean Peninsula. If they agree on a neutral, non-nuclear and peacefully unified Korea, the remaining issues will be easier to negotiate.

The paper first describes North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs. Second, it explores the strengths and weaknesses of the UN' sanctions regarding North Korea's nuclear program as well as China's position on the sanctions. Finally, this paper analyses the balance of power between the members of the Six Party Talks in Northeast Asia.

Introduction

The Korean Peninsula remains divided into the North and South since the conclusion of the Armistice Treaty on 27 July 1953. Until now, the two Koreas have struggled for physical survival, political legitimacy, and initiative for reunification. Despite sporadic and brief reconciliations, a security dilemma defined inter-Korean relations under the framework of military confrontation. (Lee, 2015: 3).

This paper analyses North Korea's nuclear threat in relation to the United Nations' sanctions, taking into account the geopolitical rivalries between the great and emergent powers in Northeast Asia. As long as the US, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea have different approaches to North Korea's denuclearization, North Korea will continue to survive UN' sanctions and international pressure and continue developing nuclear weapons.

North Korea's nuclear and missile development programmes

Pyongyang believes that deploying nuclear weapons enhances North Korea's national security. Its nuclear capacities are intended for "deterrence, international prestige, and coercive diplomacy." (Chanlett-Avery et al., 2016: 11) Therefore, North Korea considers its nuclear program to be non-negotiable. If nuclear weapons are necessary for China, Israel, India, and Pakistan, why is the same not true for North Korea? North Korea has said that it will not get rid of its nuclear weapons until all the other nuclear weapons states do the same thing.

North Korea began developing nuclear technology in the 1950s, signing various cooperation agreements with the Soviet Union. In 1965, North Korea obtained a Soviet IRT-2000 nuclear research reactor, and it constructed a second reactor by the mid-1970s, using indigenous expertise and foreign procurements.

In the 1980s, the North Korean nuclear program grew rapidly with the building of a facility for reprocessing fuel into weapons grade material and the testing of chemical high explosives. Consequently, U.S. intelligence had detected high explosives testing and discovered a third reactor. Under pressure, North Korea agreed to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1985. (Cordesman and Lin, 2015: 234)

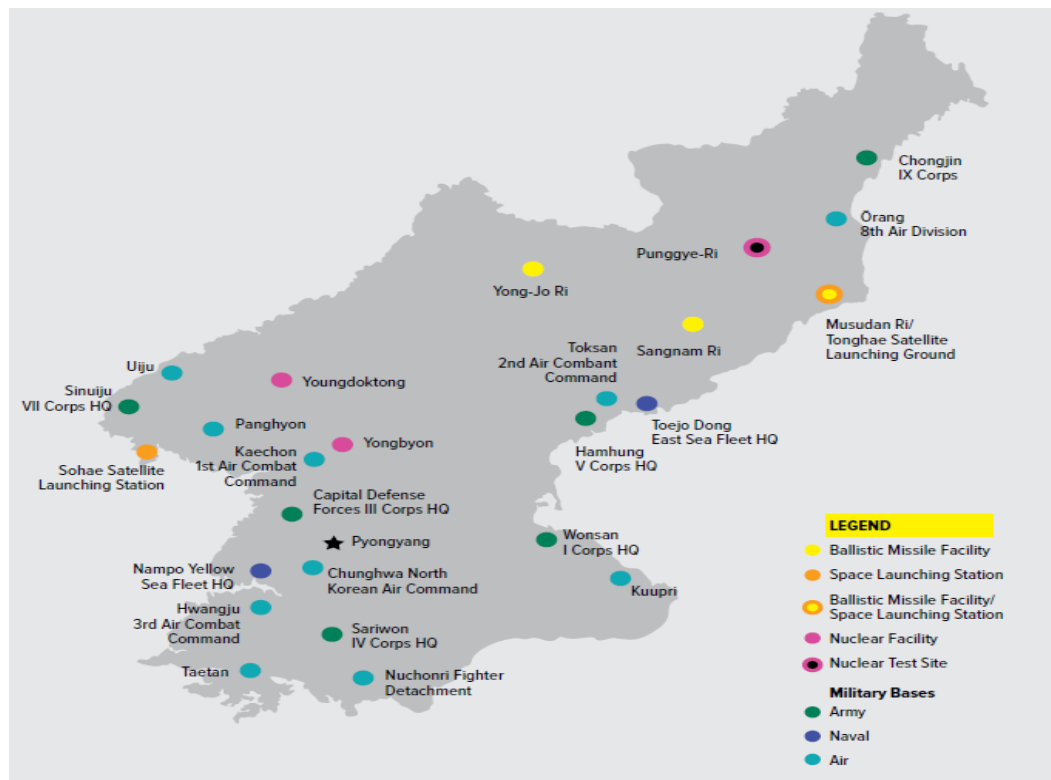
Following the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, North Korea finally signed an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement on 30 January 1992. There followed six rounds of inspections. After the IAEA was denied access to North Korea's suspect waste sites in early 1993, the Agency asked the UNSC to authorize special ad hoc inspections. In response, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT on 12 March 1993. The crisis ended on 12 October 1994, when the Clinton Administration and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework, under which North Korea agreed to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear program in exchange for fuel oil, economic aid, and the construction of two modern light-water reactors.

Since 2001, the George W. Bush Administration initiated a North Korean policy review and included it as part of the 'axis of evil'. Therefore, direct official contact between the United States of America and North Korea was shelved. Additionally, North Korea lifted its nuclear freeze and withdrew from the NPT in January 2003.

In that year, China organized the first round of the Six-Party Talks between North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and the United States of America. However, these talks have been suspended since April 2009. North Korea announced that it will never again participate in such talks. Since then, North Korea has restarted its 5MW (e) reactor and the reprocessing plant, it has built a uranium enrichment plant, and is constructing a small light water reactor. It is difficult to estimate warheads and material stockpiles due to lack of transparency and uncertainty about weapons design. Recent analyses estimate that Pyongyang will possess between 20 and 100 nuclear warheads by 2020. (Wit and Ahn, 2015: 17)

North Korea prioritizes the continued development of its ballistic missile technology. As of May 2012, North Korea had or was developing at least nine different types of guided ballistic missiles. The most known are: Hwasong-5 and Hwasong-6, that can strike South Korea; Nodong, that can strike Japan, and Taepodong-1, Taepodong-2, and the Musudan, with the potential to hit the continental U.S. The latter are still under development. Sources vary, but many analysts agree those North Korea possesses between 600-800 Hwasong-5/6s and 200-300 Nodong missiles. (Cordesman and Lin, 2015: 46)

Figure 1: Disarming North Korea



Source: Patrick M. Cronin et al. (2015), Solving Long Division. The Geopolitical Implications of Korean Unification, Center for a New American Security, Washington D.C., p. 25.

There are reports that North Korea has made slow progress toward developing a reliable long-range ballistic missile. The December 2012 launch was the first successful space launch after four consecutive failures in 1998, 2006, 2009, and April 2012. (Chanlett-Avery et al., 2016: 14) Other reports indicate that North Korea also has been developing a road-mobile Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and it has conducted multiple tests of KN-08 rocket engines. In 2015, North Korea revealed that it has been developing a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) capability, announcing the first test launch in May 2015. The second reported SLBM test, in December 2015, was a failure, according to outside analyses. (Chanlett-Avery et al., 2016: 15)

Dealing with North Korea: Nuclear Tests and United Nations' sanctions

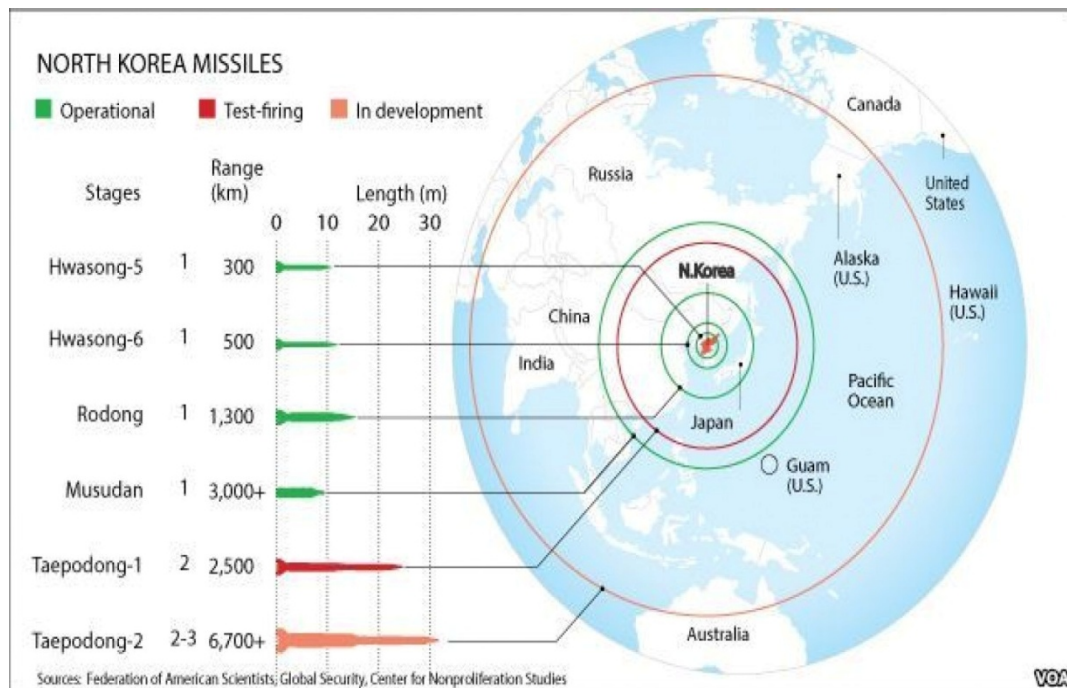
North Korea's nuclear test on 9 October 2006 marked a critical stage, making North Korea a de facto nuclear state. Since then, North Korea has conducted three additional nuclear tests and detonations (25 May 2009,

12 February 2013, and 6 January 2016) as well as long-range rocket tests (2012, 2014 and 2016).

The Non-Proliferation Treaty forbids North Korea from attaining the status of a nuclear weapons state. Yet, in 2012, Pyongyang adopted a constitutional amendment declaring North Korea to be a nuclear armed state and ignored pledges by the Security Council to refrain from a new series of tests and provocations. (Berger, 2015: 2)

Building on its nuclear tests, North Korea has probably made further advances in the development of nuclear weapons. At the same time, Pyongyang has modernized and expanded its fissile material production infrastructure, continued to procure technology abroad for its uranium enrichment program, and advanced in the development of missile delivery systems. (Wit and Ahn, 2015: 16).

Figure 2: North Korean Missiles and Ranges



Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/04/04/map-this-is-how-far-those-north-korean-missiles-can-actually-reach/>

North Korea announced on 6 January 2016 that it had successfully tested a “hydrogen bomb”. The U.S. government confirmed that the underground explosion was a nuclear test, but said it was not a full-fledged thermonuclear hydrogen bomb. (Chanlett-Avery et al., 2016: 11)

Governments around the world condemned the nuclear test as a flagrant violation of several UNSC resolutions. Also, China’s critical reaction to the test seemed to confirm Beijing’s strained relations with Pyongyang. The members of the Security Council expressed their determination to take further significant measures in the event of another nuclear test, beginning to work immediately on a new Security Council resolution.

In response to North Korea’s nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolutions 1718, 1874, 2087, 2094, and 2270, acting under Chapter VII of UN Charter, and called on Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. The sanctions aimed to impede North Korea’s weapons program, secure time for a diplomatic solution, and maximize the effect of the sanctions without negatively affecting the North Korean population.

The UN sanctions against North Korea intended to: prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and delivery systems as well as transactions involving technology, material or financial resources connected to its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missiles program; impose an embargo on military and technological materials, as well as luxury goods; and prompt North Korea to rejoin the NPT and to return to the IAEA safeguards.

On 2 March 2016, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2270 after North Korea conducted a fourth nuclear test on 6 January 2016, and launched a satellite on 7 February 2016. The resolution imposes new financial sanctions to stop the flow of cash to North Korea’s illicit activities, imposes new sanctions on shipping which aim to eliminate the possibility of trafficking prohibited goods into and out of North Korea, and prohibits states from providing any specialized training to North Korean nationals in disciplines which could contribute to North Korea’s proliferation.

North Korea is one of the most heavily sanctioned countries in the world. The UN and bilateral sanction parties, such as South Korea, the U.S., EU Member States, China, Australia, Japan, Switzerland, Singapore, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, and Russia, are

confronted with a dilemma: preventive sanctions cannot be lifted without risks and there is no guarantee that diplomatic efforts will succeed. (Berger, 2015: 1)

Presently, the sanctions on North Korea pose a range of problems. Firstly, there is incongruence between objectives and results because the expectations go far beyond. The UN' sanctions do not automatically translate into a regime change. Secondly, the UN' sanctions are formulated in the wake of nuclear or missile tests, giving the impression that they are punitive measures.

Thirdly, the control mechanisms, in particular the Panel of Experts and the Sanctions Committee, have to gather and examine information from UN member states regarding sanctions' implementation and non-compliance. However, they receive limited support - in 2015 only 18% (35 countries out of 193) of states respected UNSC resolutions. (Berger, 2015: 2)

However, in February 2015 report to the Council, the Panel of Experts found that North Korea has continued to defy Security Council resolutions by persisting with its nuclear and ballistic missile program. The authors of the document also found no evidence that the country intends to cease prohibited activities.

Finally, the structure of the UN system allows only for partial results. Sanctions are considered an effective tool for enforcing international law and maintaining peace. Yet, the responsibility for implementing and enforcing restrictive measures lies with individual states.

To date, the North Korean regime has demonstrated an ability to endure international restrictions. This situation is partially explained by North Korea's ideology which is built on survival, self-reliance and external threats, allowing a high degree of mobilization. (Berger, 2015: 4) On the other hand, Pyongyang has positioned itself on the international market as a major supplier of low-technology military equipment and has developed evasion measures similar to trafficking organizations.

Even if there is a new agreement between North Korea, UN, and IAEA, North Korea will never accept the strict verification requirements needed to make sure that it is keeping its part of the bargain. North Korea is only likely to opt for a temporary freeze of its nuclear weapons program, as it already did, and is unlikely to give up WMDs completely. Therefore, the UNSC should find new methods in order to prevent such an outcome.

China's position on the United Nations' sanctions

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, China has become both the main political supporter and the first provider of economic aid to North Korea. The need for regional stability appears as an invariable of Chinese foreign policy. To date, China officially tries to: maintain the status quo on the Korean Peninsula; avoid any North Korean hostile or provocative rhetoric and actions; encourage reforms in North Korea in a way that would be favorable to China; oppose any coercive sanctions since these only lead to more provocative and destabilizing countermeasures; restart diplomatic dialogue and negotiations in a bilateral or multilateral framework, and eventually revive the Six Party Talks. (European Parliament, 2015: 26)

During the 1990s, any attempt to pass a resolution condemning North Korea met heavy Chinese resistance. China's perspective on sanctions is guided by the idea that sanctions are not an end in themselves because they can never resolve the issue fundamentally. They can only serve as a means to promote negotiations.

Despite its cautious approach on sanctions, China has proven to be increasingly open to sanctions against North Korea, especially when Pyongyang's policies have challenged the international nuclear status quo. China considers that the North Korean nuclear program would gradually become a threat to China's security. It could lead to nuclear proliferation in East Asia. If South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan seek to possess nuclear weapons, China's national and regional objectives confront big challenges. Taiwanese possession of nuclear weapons is especially unacceptable to China.

On the other hand, China is concerned that North Korea's nuclear weapons would lead to: U.S. military intervention, armed conflict between the two Koreas, regime collapse in North Korea, a massive refugee influx to China, and a direct confrontation between China and the U.S.

Therefore, China seems ready to assume much more responsibility for the North Korean nuclear file and has expressed its growing discontent vis-à-vis the unpredictable policies of Pyongyang. The strains in the relationship began to surface when Pyongyang tested nuclear weapons. Consequently, China supported UNSC Resolution 1718, UNSC Resolution 1874 and UNSC

Resolution 2094, signaling a shift in tone from diplomacy to punishment.

For example, China reacted very strongly against the nuclear test undertaken by North Korea in 2013. In addition to calling the North Korean Ambassador to complain about this test, China imposed new trade sanctions, reduced the energy supplies provided to Pyongyang, and called for denuclearization talks. But Pyongyang expressed its bitterness and frustration over China and Russia's endorsement of the UNSC resolutions, accusing Beijing and Moscow of abandoning basic principles under the influence of arbitrary and high-handed U.S. practices.

UNSC Resolution 2270 was first negotiated between China and the U.S. before being presented to the other UNSC members during consultations on 25 February 2016. The negotiations lasted seven weeks, reflecting the need to bridge the traditional divisions in approach between China and the U.S., as well as the complexity of the new measures.

It appears that North Korea's 7 February 2016 satellite launch was an important factor in convincing China that a more robust response was needed. However, China made clear that sanctions are not the fundamental way to solve the North Korean nuclear issue. Furthermore, Beijing reiterated its call for a two-track approach, including efforts to end the Korean War formally, and to resume the Six-Party Talks.

It remains to be seen whether UNSC Resolution 2270 will lead to greater unity among China, the U.S. and other key regional players in dealing with North Korea's nuclear program, and to what extent China can use its bilateral leverage to exert pressure on Pyongyang. However, China does not have as much influence over North Korea's security behavior as the U.S. believes.

Power dynamics on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia

▪ United States of America

U.S. policy towards North Korea is designed to pressure the regime in Pyongyang: it requests North Korea's denuclearization as it previously promised in the Six-Party Talks; it coordinates closely with South Korea and Japan; it attempts to convince China to change its approach on North Korea, and it applies pressure to Pyongyang through arms embargoes and sanctions.

But with the Six-Party Talks suspended and North Korea determined never to surrender its nuclear weapons, the U.S. strategy has become co-terminus with regime change. (Mason, 2015: 3) But the U.S. and Japan do not want military conflict with China. Both the U.S. and China have reasons to prevent and contain a conflict in the Koreas and Northeast Asia. Neither can win any conflict between them, and neither has an incentive to become locked into an arms race. (See Figure 3) (Cordesman and Lin, 2015)

The United States has played a critical role in Asia for decades. The U.S. has remained firmly committed to the security of South Korea ever since the Korean War. The U.S. alliances with South Korea and Japan remain the foundations of U.S. regional security and economic strategies in Northeast Asia. However, there are important changes in the strategies and force postures of the U.S. and China. Presently, the U.S.-China relationship is characterized by economic interdependence and geopolitical competition.

From the U.S. point of view, Japan can balance China's rise in the Asia-Pacific region, and can play an important role in protecting the post-Cold War world order. (Prayas, 2015: 4) On one hand, the U.S. encourages Japan to resolve historical issues with Asian countries through dialogue. On the other hand, Washington expects Japan to play a greater role in Asia's geopolitics and in ensuring regional security.

Current U.S. policy calls for a rebalancing of U.S. strategy in Asia composed of five strategic pillars: strengthening alliances, forging deeper partnerships with emerging powers, building a constructive relationship with China, strengthening regional institutions, and building an economic architecture to increase the benefits of trade.

▪ China

China was North Korea's main ally throughout the Cold War. In 1961, the two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which obliges Beijing to intervene in case of unprovoked aggression against Pyongyang. The Chinese government has tried to persuade North Korean leaders to revoke the clause that would force Beijing to come to Pyongyang's defense. Beijing also has said if conflict is initiated by Pyongyang it would not abide by its treaty obligation.

During most of the 1990s, China-North Korea relations have been quite cold, especially after China normalized diplomatic ties with South Korea in 1992. Even with the

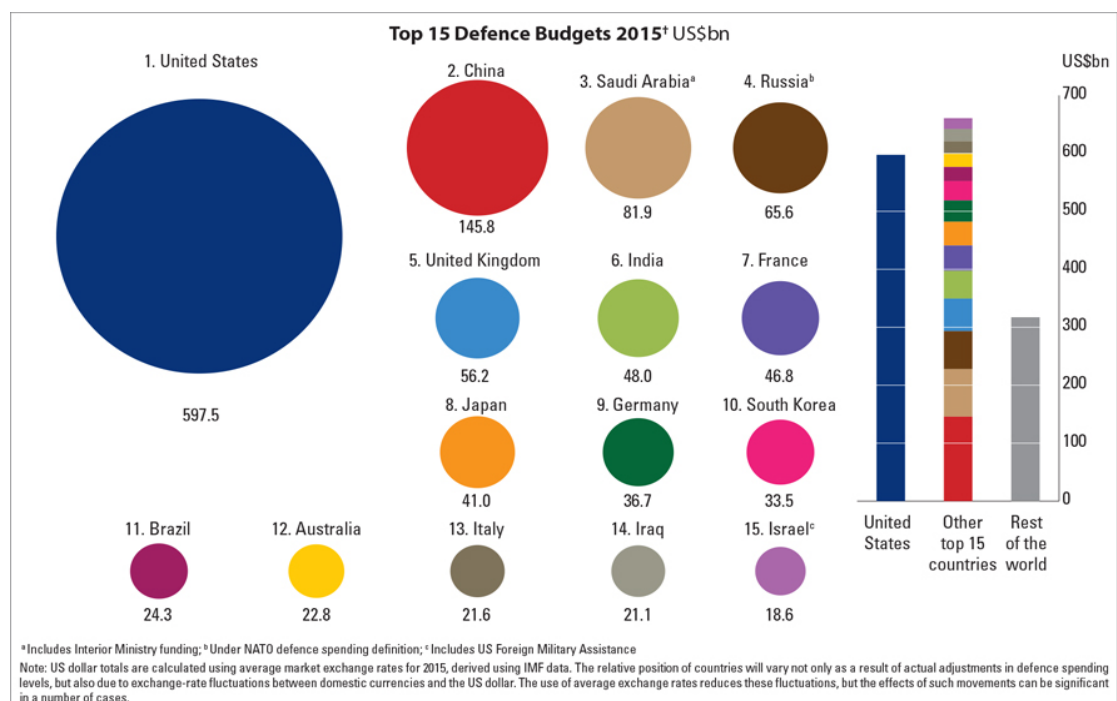
dramatic decrease in bilateral trade, China has remained North Korea's largest supplier of food and oil, saving the country from a disastrous collapse. In addition, China has shown far more interest in cultivating its important economic relations with South Korea.

Beijing looks to maintain its traditional friendship with North Korea, which serves as a buffer for China. This policy ensures U.S. forces away from its borders, and represents a counterbalance to Japan. In fact, China's three worst-case scenarios over the North Korean issue are: North Korean nuclear blackmail directed at China; Japan going nuclear, and a U.S.-North Korea war.

China does not formally allocate military forces for the defense of North Korea and does not forward deploy military forces in the country. Beijing would prefer any transformation in the region happen through negotiations between the two Koreas and through international diplomacy involving Beijing as a main East Asian power.

Chinese goals on the Korean Peninsula include: maintaining peace and stability; helping North Korea's regime survive; promoting economic exchange and cooperation with South Korea; and enhancing China's influence in Korean affairs.

Figure 3: Defense budgets in Northeast Asia



Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 2016, <https://www.iiss.org/-/media//images/publications/the%20military%20balance/milbal2016/mb%202016%20top%202015%20defence%20budgets%202015.jpg?la=en>

▪ South Korea

South Korea has sought to improve relations with North Korea with consistently uncertain results. For example, the “sunshine policy” (1998-2002) emphasized increased communication, assistance, and exchanges with North Korea while delaying political settlement and reunification. The „peace and prosperity policy” (2003-2007) followed a similar pattern. However, after the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island attacks in 2010, South Korea started promoting a new strategy, called “active deterrence” or “proactive deterrence”, which emphasized enhanced offensive capabilities in order to deter North Korea.

Meanwhile, South Korea follows a dual hedging policy of relying on the U.S.-South Korea alliance for security issues, and on China-South Korea relations for economic issues. But this hedging strategy will become unsustainable as pressure to choose between China and the U.S. increases.

The United States and South Korea are allies since 1954. To avert a possible North Korean nuclear attack, the U.S. plans to deploy its anti-missile defense system - Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) in South Korea. This move is considered a direct threat by China and Russia. After North Korea launched a satellite in 7 February

2016, apparently to test its ballistic missile technology, Seoul agreed to begin talks with Washington on deploying a THAAD unit with the U.S. military in South Korea. Finally, the United States and South Korea have increased their efforts to tacitly prepare for the challenges of unification by forming a combined division consisting of the US 2nd Infantry Division and a ROK brigade-level unit to execute strategic operations, such as eliminating weapons of mass destruction. (Cronin, 2015: 7)

Beijing has been trying to counter the U.S.-South Korea alliance by strengthening relations with Seoul. Since Park Geun-Hye became president of South Korea in 2013, China-South Korea relations have warmed dramatically. China is South Korea's largest trading partner, its biggest export market, its biggest source of imports, and the main destination for South Korean foreign investment. In 2013, bilateral trade volume exceeded South Korea's trade with the United States, Japan and the European Union combined. (Bondaz, 2015: 8) During the summer of 2014, for the first time in the history of the People's Republic of China, Chinese President Xi Jinping traveled to South Korea before visiting the North. (Park, 2015: 5).

In order to cope with existing and emerging threats on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea's October 2014 National Security Strategy specifies several strategic tasks: establishing a robust defense posture and reinforcing future-oriented defense capabilities; developing inter-Korean relations through the trust-building process; developing the ROK-U.S. strategic alliance and promoting international security cooperation and others; establishing cooperative frameworks for peace in Northeast Asia and around the world; and others. (Lee, 2015: 8).

In addition, President Park Geun-Hye presented her security concept - the North East Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), which calls for North-East Asian nations to enhance cooperation, first on soft security issues (such as climate change, terrorism prevention, cyber and space technology, and nuclear safety) before expanding the trust-building process to more sensitive areas, such as disarmament and denuclearization. The NAPCI aims to create the conditions for a 'grand reconciliation' between China, Japan and South Korea. In this plan, the U.S. would maintain the role of an external security balancer. (Casarini, 2014: 2)

▪ Japan

The greatest threats for Japan's national security emanate from China and North Korea. Firstly, China's military rise prompted Japan to pursue security cooperation with the U.S., South Korea, Australia, and India. Secondly, Japanese experts believe that North Korea's leadership is unlikely to deploy missiles against Japan, but Pyongyang could use the threat of attack to blackmail Japan. (Sakaki, 2015: 10)

There are scenarios which assert that the current U.S.-South Korea-Japan security alliance would not persist without North Korea. A unified Korea theoretically could gravitate to China on security cooperation, reflecting the weight of their economic relations. Historically, a Korea-Japan relationship without the U.S. to enforce cooperation is fraught with conflict. (Sakaki, 2015: 5)

Japanese-Korean relations are, however, difficult to improve because of Japan's role in World War II. Secondly, Tokyo and Seoul are engaged in a territorial dispute over the Dokdo/Takeshima Island, controlled by South Korea.

However, Seoul has refused to take a common stance with Beijing on Tokyo's revisionism on Japan's wartime history. It also took a relatively restrained position toward Tokyo's reinterpretation of the Japanese constitution in 2014. Finally, it did not criticize the passage of security bills for expanding the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' mandate. (Park, 2015: 7)

Meanwhile, Japan is sending mixed signals to its neighbors. On one hand, since the spring of 2014, Tokyo has been involved in talks with Pyongyang over the fate of the Japanese nationals abducted decades ago. On the other hand, in November 2014 Japan and China signed a "four-point agreement" to improve bilateral ties, inclusively to resolve bilateral issues, such as the territorial disputes over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

▪ Russia

President Vladimir Putin's strategy to establish relations with the East began before the Ukrainian crisis. In the early 1990s, Russia had identified its border with North Korea as an opportunity for free trade, leading to the formation of the Rajin-Sonbong Special Economic Zone in North Korea. (Park, 2013: 138) In February 2000, Russia's foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, signed a friendship treaty with North Korea. In August 2001, Russia offered to supply North Korea with power plants to offset its energy shortfalls.

Russia thinks that building relations with North Korea might provide some advantages in negotiations with China, at the regional level, and with the West, at a global level. Firstly, Russia is likely to tolerate the North Korean provocations until its vital interests are threatened. Secondly, Russia cancelled most of North Korea's 11 billion USD debts in 2014.

There are economic interests, too. Russia made two interesting proposals: the building of a Trans-Siberian and then a Trans-Korean Railway (TSR-TKR), and a Trans-Korean Gas Pipeline from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates the two Koreas to Russia's border with North Korea. (Blank, 2015: 2)

If Russia establishes itself as a long-term player in Northeast Asia, with broader objectives in the region, it could have drawbacks for China. China can try to strengthen the bilateral relationship with North Korea in order to prevent Russia from squeezing its space on the Korean Peninsula and threatening its interests in the neighborhood. If Russia sides with the U.S.-Japanese alliance, China will be surrounded by a triple alliance, and possibly deprived of the chance to re-emerge as a superpower.

Conclusion

North Korea's challenge in Northeast Asia is multidimensional:

1. The possibility of another outbreak of the Korean War still exists on the Korean Peninsula. The Armistice Treaty, signed in 27 July 1953, was never followed by a complete peace process. Additionally,

North Korea has not normalized relations with the United States.

2. North Korea's nuclear technology and materials might be sold to third parties. This is even more likely given that Pyongyang already is an important link in worldwide WMD and missile technology proliferation.
3. North Korea's deployment of nuclear weapons decreases regional security. For example, China already has more nuclear neighbors than any other power. Further, if North Korea persists in its WMD initiatives, South Korea, Japan, and even Taiwan may be agitated to develop nuclear weapons, even without U.S. permission. This would increase the risk of a nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia, based on a security dilemma contagion.

All the parties in the Six Party Talks agree that North Korea should be denuclearized and that no war should occur on the Korean Peninsula. But they are dealing with the Korean issue according to their individual strategies of acquiring a dominant position in Northeast Asia instead of building and sharing a common strategy regarding the denuclearization of North Korea. Further, they have difficulty in coordinating their actions regarding adoption and implementation of the United Nations' sanctions towards North Korea.

As long as the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea have different approaches to North Korea's denuclearization, North Korea will continue to survive UN sanctions and international pressures and continue developing nuclear weapons.

Recommendations for policy

There are several options that can be pursued in order to improve regional security in Northeast Asia.

1. The members of the Six Party Talks should persuade North Korea to refrain from changing the status quo. Otherwise, Pyongyang will increase the chances of a major-power intervention.
2. UN members' expectations of North Korea's international behavior should be limited. In the short term, the efforts must focus on beginning a tactical dialogue with North Korea in order to manage the relationship, and slow down the nuclear program.
3. The United States of America and China should agree on a Joint Peace Plan for the Korean Peninsula. They can discuss inclusively the regional order after a possible Korean unification. The problem lies with China's perception that a unified Korea will negatively affect Beijing's strategic interests. If the two powers agree on a neutral, non-nuclear, and peacefully unified Korea, all the other issues will be negotiated faster.

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