

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Nuclear Armament Of The North Korean State

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Introduction

The North Korean state has been facing socioeconomic and political instability ever since being established in 1945. Their authoritarian leaders, most recently Kim Jong Un, have managed to amass the title of a “rogue state” through its long history with WMD (weapons of mass destruction). North Korea first obtained access to nuclear energy in the 1950s through the Soviet Union. Its long and complicated history with nuclear weapons began in 1985, when the country acceded to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which they promptly withdrew from in 2003.

In 2006, North Korea joined a handful of wealthy and influential nations, earning the title of a country who has tested its first nuclear weapon. Since then, the state’s WMD program has included testing nuclear devices in 2009, 2013, 2016 and 2017. On July 4 and 28, Pyongyang successfully tested their first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Hwasong-14 ICBM. The missile has been reported to have the capability of traveling 10,000 km, or 6,200 miles. This range is enough to target immediate US territories in the Pacific Ocean such as Alaska. The test has demonstrated not only North Korea’s growing technology in nuclear development, but also a political message to the state’s enemies.

North Korea’s devotion to a strong nuclear program also attracted international attention and subsequent criticism from the United Nations. The United Nations Security Council has developed seven major sanction resolutions against North Korea. Each one following a major nuclear test the state conducted. In addition to these sanctions, the resolutions also grant UN member states with the ability to prohibit and examine North Korean cargo that is within their jurisdiction and dispose of its illicit content.

Despite a strong devotion to the nuclear program, North Korea has one of the lowest living standards in the world, chronic food shortages, and alarming human rights abuses. A major concern to the international community and this committee is the DPRK’s relative isolation regarding major concern to the international community and have limited the DPRK’s international engagement and the growing tension that has made diplomacy a hard task.

Definition of Key Terms

Six Party Talks

The six party talks were a series of multilateral deliberations held since 2003 and attended by North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and The United States on the issue of nuclear disarmament in North Korea. The state decided to withdraw from the six party talks since 2009.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Created in 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency is an international organization under the United Nations that advocates for the peaceful usage of nuclear energy, and to prohibit its use for military purpose.

Intercontinental Ballistic Missile

An Intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, is a military missile capable of flying more than 5,500 kilometers or 3,420 miles. An ICBM doesn't travel through the earth's orbit, but instead orbits outer space to strike a target thousands of miles away. Experts have estimated that an ICBM is capable of destroying entire cities.

Thermonuclear Weapon

Thermonuclear weapons, also known as hydrogen bombs, employs the fusion of isotopes of the hydrogen molecule. This is one of the two main types of nuclear weapons, and the bomb results in explosions in the megaton range.

Agreed Framework

The Agreed Framework was signed on October 21, 1994, between DPRK and the United States. The goal of the agreement was to stop and replace North Korea's nuclear power program with a nuclear nonproliferation program. The agreement broke down in 2003.

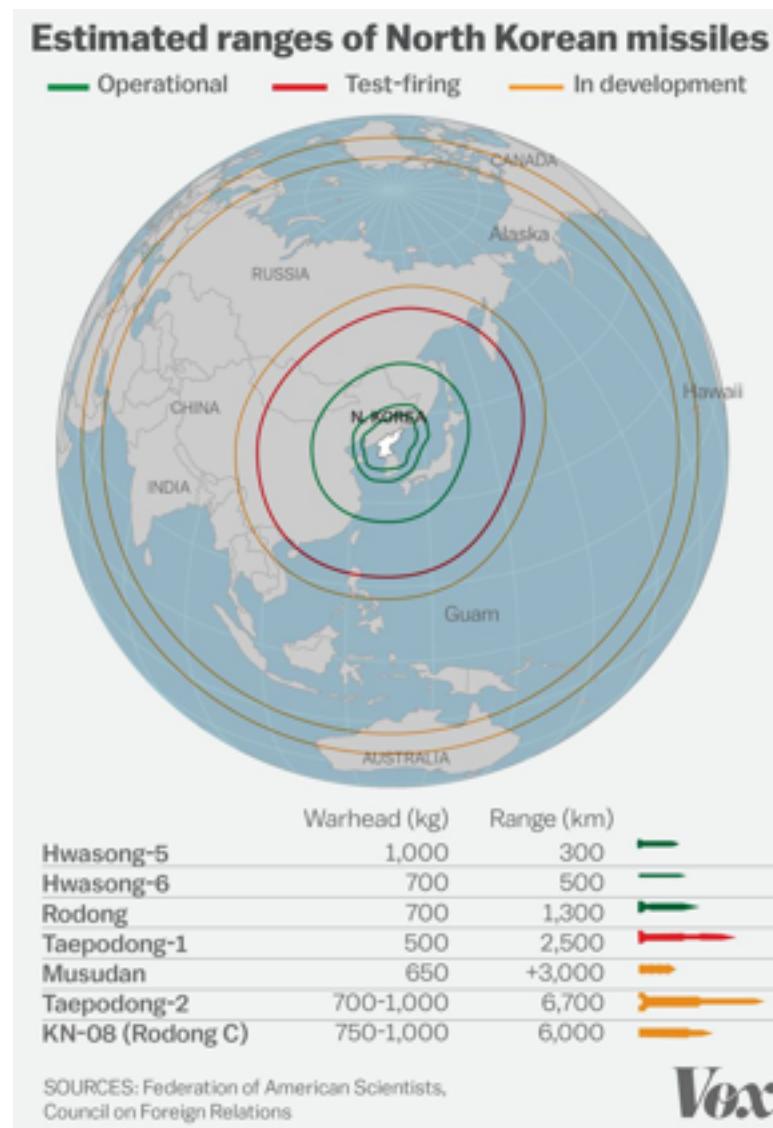
Fission Weapon

Fission weapons, also known as atomic bombs, employs the process where a neutron collides with an atom's nucleus, splitting the atom in two and releases a massive amount of energy. Though controlling the velocity and mass of the reaction, nuclear fission can be generated for weapons of mass destruction.

Background Information

North Korea's nuclear program

For decades, North Korea has been relentlessly working to develop a functional yet powerful nuclear weapon. Such ambition for a world-class nuclear program began soon after the end of World War II under the rule of former Supreme Leader Kim Il Sung, who was convinced that the country needed to protect itself from the United States. In the early 1960s, North Korea began constructing the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center with the help of the Soviet Union. By the early 1970s, North Korea had obtained access to plutonium reprocessing technology through the Soviet Union. In recent trends, it appears that the proliferation of nuclear weapons in North Korea has gotten bigger and stronger. The regime's recent efforts led to the groundbreaking development of an ICBM. However, the regime also needs to produce a miniature nuclear bomb that is capable of fitting onto such a missile in order to produce a weapon. An underground test on September 3, which was the regime's sixth test since the testing begun in 2006, suggested that the goal was within reach. The test triggered an earthquake that was 6.3 in magnetite and was estimated by many to be more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the World War II by the United States.



The status and strengths of North Korean nuclear weapons.

International response

Sanctions

An economic sanction is the use of financial discipline applied by one or more countries against another country or entity. This may take shape in the form of trade barriers, embargoes, tariffs, and more. However, economic sanctions are not exclusive to economic circumstances, they may be imposed due to sociopolitical or the recipient's standing in international affairs. Thus, economic sanctions are a powerful tool in diplomacy. However, in the case of North Korea, it doesn't seem to deter the regime's desire to halt its nuclear program. Since its first nuclear weapons test in 2006, the United Nations Security Council

has imposed eight sanctions on the country. Most recently, the council passed Resolution



On September 3, 2017, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un looks at a metal casing after rumors of an ICBM launching from North Korea broke.

2375 on September 11 2017. The resolution “limited North Korea’s crude oil and refined petroleum product imports, banned joint ventures, textile exports, natural gas condensate and liquid imports, and banned North Korean nationals from working abroad in other countries.” According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), coal briquettes were 34% of North Korea’s exports in 2015. This is followed by clothing, which were primarily suits and coats at 28%. However, North Korea’s largest trading partner, China, has not expressed such desire to break trading relations with North Korea.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America

The United States of America signed the Agreed Framework with North Korea on October 21, 1994, ending an 18 month crisis during which North Korea had announced its decision to withdraw from the NPT. The Clinton administration emphasized open communication and negotiation. However, before the Clinton administration could solidify the nonproliferation deal with North Korea, the Bush administration conducted its own North Korea policy review. US intelligence had revealed DPRK’s plans for uranium enrichment and the Agreed Framework eventually broke down to evolve to the Six Party Talks. US President Bush tabled North Korea an “axis of evil” along

with Iran and Iraq in 2002. His administration cut diplomatic ties with the state and threatened the regime. The Obama administration offered to extend a diplomatic relationship with North Korea, leaving behind past aggressions by using strategic patience. Following this extension, DPRK launched its second nuclear test in May 2009. The “USA first” policy was supported by UN member states in the Security Council, and resolution 1874 was passed. Tensions between North Korea and the United States have been one of the driving forces against North Korea’s determination to build a strong nuclear program. Recently, the President of the United States Donald Trump took to Twitter to criticize Pyongyang’s developments in ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, dubbing Kim Jong Un “rocket man.” In a cryptic tweet on 8 October, Trump claimed that past negotiations have failed miserably with North Korea and “only one thing will work.”

People's Republic of China

The Chinese government was extremely involved in matters on the Korean peninsula in past years. During the Cold War, China formed a trio with North Korea and the Society Union. All three supported each other politically, economically, and militarily. However, recently the state has taken a relatively disinterested stance in its relations with North Korea in international relations. Geopolitical changes has prompted the Chinese government to start diplomatic relations with South Korea. China is North Korea’s biggest trading partner and arguably it’s most powerful ally. In 2015, 85% of North Korea’s imports were from China, and 83% of its exports were purchased by China. China has continued to fund North Korea through backdoor channels and has devoted little stake into the negotiation’s long term success. However, China has also consistently been the bridge between North Korea with the international world, playing a crucial part in the Six Party Talks. In many cases China took a leading role in connecting North Korea to international talks and putting pressure on Pyongyang to take action. Before the sixth round of the Six Party Talks, talks fell apart as the United States placed. In response, North Korea launched a long-range rocket that stepped up the state’s provocations. Beijing put pressure on North Korea to reenter talks within the multilateral framework. However, China’s primary interest lies within a stable relationship with North Korea, and has been known to take the state’s side in many cases eto pursue a diplomatic relationship.

Republic of Korea

In the 1970s it was South Korea, not North Korea, that pursued a nuclear development program. However, Seoul has closed its developments after Americans discovered such a program and pressured Seoul to abort. The US and South Korea agreed during September that they will revise a bilateral treaty that limits the South’s ballistic missiles’ limits and weight. South Korean President Moon Jae-in has stated that he “do(es) not agree that South Korea needs to develop our own nuclear weapons.” In previous ages, South Korea hasn’t been keen on focusing on reconciliation with its

neighbors. The relationship within the Korean peninsula has resulted in an enormous amount of tension in the area. South Korea has also often been the subject of North Korea's nuclear threats, with Pyongyang infamously threatening to reduce South Korea's capital city to a "sea of fire."eeeeee

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event |
|-------------------|--|
| December 12, 1985 | North Korea signs the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) An international treaty that was designed to promote nuclear non-proliferation, to promote the peaceful usage of nuclear energy, and achieving nuclear disarmament through cooperation. |
| January 10, 2003 | DPRK withdraws from the NPT North Korea withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and declares it has nuclear weapons in the following April of that year. |
| October 9, 2006 | North Korea conducts its first nuclear test North Korea launched its first nuclear missile, in which the state claims they were successful in. The United Nations adopted Resolution 1718 in response, which enforced economic sanctions on North Korea. |
| May 25, 2009 | North Korea conducts second nuclear test North Korea carries out its second underground nuclear test. The United Nations Security Council condemned the action and passed several sanctions month following the incident. |
| February 12, 2013 | North Korea conducts third nuclear test North Korea launches its third and largest nuclear test in the country's history. This attracted UN condemnation and sanctions, provoking military tension in Korea for the following months. |

The hydrogen bomb is tested for the first time in DPRK

North Korea officials claims they have successfully detonated a hydrogen bomb. Many countries, including the US, claim this wasn't verified.

January 6, 2016

North Korea conducts its first successful ICBM test

North Korea alleges that it has carried out its first successful launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Later in the month, the state threatens to attack the "heart of the US" with nuclear weapons.

July 5, 2017

DPRK's Sixth nuclear test causes seismic event

North Korea carries out its most recent nuclear weapon test. The state claims that the weapon is a hydrogen bomb that could be remodeled as an ICBM. Some groups describes the weapon to be eight times stronger than the bomb used on Hiroshima in WWII. The incident caused international uproar including escalating tensions with the United States.

September 3, 2017

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Concerning weapons of massive destruction, 28 April 2004 (**S/RES/1540**)
- Establishment of a Security Council Sanctions Committee, 14 October 2006 (**S/RES/1718**)
- On measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in connection with its nuclear weapon tests, 12 June 2009 (**S/RES/1874**)
- Condemning the missile launch of 12 Dec. 2012 by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 22 January 2013 (**S/RES/2087**)
- Strengthening sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and condemning the missile launch of 12 Feb. 2013, 7 March 2013 (**S/RES/2094**)
- Strengthening sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and condemning the nuclear test of 9 Sept. 2016, 30 November 2016 (**S/RES/2321**)
- On strengthening sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and condemning the ballistic missile launches of 3 and 28 July 2017, 5 August 2017 (**S/RES/2371**)
- Non-proliferation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 11 September 2017 (**S/RES/2375**)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

In one of the first efforts to appease the growth of a budding nuclear program, the international community signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty with North Korea in December 1985. However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discovered in 1992 that North Korea had diverted plutonium from its civilian program for weapons purposes. In 2003, DPRK withdrew from the program, creating speculation on the future of diplomatic relations with the country.

The Six Party Talks were once the lead in the attempt to solve the issue of the threatening nuclear program in North Korea. Created in 2003, the Six Party Talks were held intermediately in Beijing, China, until North Korea withdrew from talks in 2009. While the United States has been hesitant to resume negotiations, China has taken a lead role in its effort to relaunching the talks. Although the talks failed to achieve anything concrete, it did prove that open communication with North Korea was possible, and established the goal of creating a nuclear-free Korea peninsula.

As mentioned in previous sections, economic sanctions are often levied heavily against North Korea to discourage the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The United Nations itself has particularly passed eight sanctions against North Korea. However, these sanctions don't seem to take a particularly effective effect as Pyongyang has continued its pursuit to building a powerful nuclear weapons system.

Possible Solutions

The nuclear armament in North Korea has been a problem that has plagued member nations for decades. While it may be tempting to ignore the state and cut off communication, it's important to resist that urge. It is exceptionally tough to resolve the issue because North Korea has virtually backed out of every denuclearization agreement made in the international community. Many experts suggest that the reason for North Korea's obsession with a budding nuclear program lies within its need to secure stability and security for its nation. Others claim that it serves as a warning to strong countries in the world to leave the state alone.

One of the most popular proposed solutions to this issue involves China. If China took on a more active role in pressuring Pyongyang to relinquish its nuclear program, it could incentives the state to do so. China maintains around 80% to 85% of North Korea's trade. If China threatens to cut economic relations with North Korea, or at least drastically cut down the amount of trade and limiting Chinese businesses working with the state, it would shake North Korea's economy. Putting pressure on the regime could result in possible negotiation talks. The problem in this situation is that China doesn't seem to have the incentives to pressure North Korea into dropping its program. Instead, America could levy secondary sanctions against Chinese business entities that trade with North Korea, or pressure China into taking on a more active role. Nevertheless, if China took on a more active role in pressing Pyongyang, there could be potential developments in nonproliferation.

Another possible solution could stem from communication between America and North Korea. Towards the end of the Clinton administration in America, former Defense Secretary William Perry discovered that North Koreans seem to be very interested in the possibility of normalizing relations with America. Providing economic incentives, such as the possibility of a trade partnership, with the US, Japan, South Korea, and other countries, could potentially convince the state to abolish the nuclear program.

America could similarly decide to conduct a preemptive strike on the regime. A massive military arsenal sent to North Korea to destroy its military and leadership. The benefits of this plan is that it would end the standoff between these states and resolve the problem. However, the United States risks the possibility of the program failing or North Korea's brutal retaliation.

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