

Research Report

Issue: The issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons
Forum: Security Council
Position: President
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Introduction



The question of North Korea (formally referred to as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and its Nuclear weapons is one asked by many. Since 1955 the DPRK has closed its borders and forms a big question mark for the rest of the global community. Not much is known about the totalitarian dictatorship led by Kim Jung Un. Even less is known about the possible nuclear weapon stock situated in the nation. In order to fully understand this issue, we need to broaden our focus and have a look at the conflict on the Korean peninsula.

On the Korean peninsula there are two different countries that

have been at war with each other ever since the China- and Soviet-Union-backed Northern part (later to be known as the DPRK) invaded the United Nations-backed South (later to be known as the Republic of Korea (ROK)) in 1950. In 1953 both countries agreed on an armistice, which only was a ceasefire not a peace treaty. On the 27th of July 1955, a peace treaty was to be signed by all involved parties. However, the leader of the Republic of Korea refused to sign even after the DPRK and the United States of America (USA) agreed on signing it. Diplomatic and military tensions, however, did not disappear. Over the years the ROK developed into a western-oriented democracy while the DPRK evolved into an isolationistic communistic dictatorship, this further depend the divide between the two nations.

Since the armistice was agreed upon the situation hasn't changed much. Tensions never seized to exit. Examples of these tensions are situation at the demilitarised zone, the First Battle of Yeonpyejong or the sinking of naval vessels such as the ROKS Cheonang. Most of the tensions, however, have to do with the development of a nuclear program by the DPRK. On the international stage, many world leaders have already expressed their concern about the development and thus put it on the agenda of the United Nations.

Definition of Key Terms

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC):

The UNSC is the most important body of the UN. It is the only body that can enforce decisions and can for example legally authorise the invasion of a certain country. There are 15 members of which 5 are permanent members, which possess veto-rights. This means that they can block any resolution by voting against. The UNSC has been very active on the issue of the Korean war over the last couple of decades but because of the interests of the USA, Russian Federation and People's Republic of China it is very hard to take the needed measures.

Korean Demilitarised Zone (DMZ):

The DMZ is the de-facto border between the DPRK and the ROK. It functions as a 4-

kilometre-wide buffer zone between the two nations. It is, however, all but demilitarised; both the DPRK and the ROK the stationed troops along the DMZ. There have been numerous incidents at the DMZ, such as but not limited to the spreading of propaganda via loudspeakers or the digging of tunnels underneath the DMZ.

Nuclear power:

A nuclear power is a country the possess nuclear weaponry. There are a couple of nuclear powers: China, the DPRK, France, India, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the UK, the USA and, arguably, Israel. Only five of these nations, knowingly the P5-members of the Security Council, are officially recognised by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

General Overview



The conflict on the Korean peninsula has been around since the Cold War and the battle between communism and capitalism still continues to this day. With the armistice almost regularly being broken by both parties, further escalation of the conflict seems not far away. Armed forces of both nations are ready to go into combat. It is being estimated that the DPRK's has about 1,300,000 military personnel while the ROK only has 495,000. What both countries do have in common is that they both want a united Korea

with their political attitude being carried out. The DPRK's policy of army first does not seem to contribute to a peaceful uniting of the Korean peninsula, in reaction to this policy and great military presence at the DMZ, the USA has stationed military units in the ROK, much to the distress of the DPRK. This forms an important part of its propaganda and it is partly because of this that its population is very anti-American.

Whilst the ROK kept good relations with its allies during the years, the DPRK lost trust of its allies by developing nuclear weaponry. Most nations are especially worried about the development of the DPRK into a nuclear power and many have condemned the DPRK's nuclear tests. The UNSC has adopted several resolutions on the actions of the DPRK. Some of these resolutions contain embargoes. These embargoes contribute to the dire situation of the Northern economy. An impulse which is desperately needed in the economy is foreign currency. Tourism, trade with China and the selling of weaponry blueprints are some of the main sources of foreign currency into the DPRK's economy. Another important source of income is the Kaesong Industrial Complex in which both Koreas cooperate. It was established as part of the Sunshine policy implemented in the year 1998 by the ROK in order to strengthen ties with the DPRK. In the ROK the government abandoned the Sunshine policy and is the current government is very much opposed to working with the current government of the DPRK.

Because of the fact that the DPRK is becoming a more and more military powerful nation and

that it is very hostile towards its southern neighbour, many individuals, think-tanks and governments worry about the possible escalation of the conflict into a nuclear conflict. Hence, international organisations such as the UNSC have already acted on the matter via resolutions, but they haven't succeeded in stopping the DPRK.

These UNSC resolutions were most of the time the result of recent testing of ballistic and/or nuclear missiles/warhead by the DPRK. They did however not have a major impact on the government's policy, as stated in the paragraph above, and it is therefore a relevant topic to be put on the UNSC agenda.

As recently as the beginning of 2016 there has been a proposal by the DPRK to the USA to discuss a peace treaty.¹ While this may seem a positive development, that was not completely the case. The USA rejected the offer due to the fact that there was no willingness from the DPRK to put a section in any future peace treaty on nuclear disarmament.² This illustrates the essence of the conflict to third powers such as the USA and China. As long as the DPRK has a nuclear program, it will remain an unignorable threat to the rest of the world.

Another important part of the issue that tends to be overshadowed by the nuclear aspect, but nevertheless is very significant would be the human rights conditions in the DPRK. The Human Rights Watch even characterises the North Korean people as the "world's most brutalised people"³, due to the severe restrictions on economic and political freedom. According to Amnesty International the North Korean state deports enemies of the government, such as Christians and party-critics, to labour camps without a trial. Estimates are that there are up to 10,000 deaths per year in these camps.⁴

Major Parties Involved

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea:

The government of the DPRK does its best to hide the situation inside its borders from the outside world, so not much is known about the country. The country entertains an army-first policy, which means that it heavily invests into its military. It is not allowed to develop ballistic missiles and yet, to the concern of the international community, it does. Although it is very dependent on China, the DPRK is in power to start a major conflict on the Korean peninsula and must be dealt with very diligently.

The Republic of Korea:

The western-backed state has a flourishing economy, but very dependent on western support in order to remain safe from threats from its northern neighbour. The ROK is opposed to the DPRK's continuous developing of advanced weaponry and tries to pursue a peaceful solution to the conflict.

¹ Cassella, Megan; Chiacu, Doina (21 February 2016). "[U.S. rejected North Korea peace talks offer before last nuclear test: State Department](#)". [Reuters](#).

² ,

³ "[Human Rights in North Korea](#)". [hrw.org](#). Human Rights Watch. 17 February 2009.

⁴ "[North Korea defends human rights record in report to UN](#)". [BBC News](#). 8 October 2014.

The United States of America:

The USA is very much involved in the issue. Not only because it was one of the main parties involved in the original Korean war, but mostly because it has been hostile to the DPRK ever since the Korean war. Its former president George Bush characterised the DPRK as one of the axes of evil. It doesn't even entertain diplomatic relations with the DPRK. The USA sees the ROK as an important economic and strategic ally in Eastern Asia and thus protects it by having a couple of divisions of its army stationed in the ROK. This means that if the situation escalates the USA is almost definitely going to be involved. A recent turn in US policy could be their growing willingness to provide the ROK with nuclear weapons. This is all but a sure thing, but president Donald J. Trump has hinted it multiple times.

China:

China has always been the most important ally of the DPRK. They have been the DPRK's surrogate during international peace talks and are their most important trading partner. Studies show that China accounts for more than half of the DPRK's international trade. Yet, the Chinese government is critical of the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The Chinese delegation to the UN has vetoed in favour of resolutions critical of the DPRK's policies such as UNSC resolutions 2087, 2094 and 2270.

Timeline of Key Events

June 25, 1950: The North starts its invasion the South. This marks the beginning of the Korean War.

September 1950: The United Nations sends a force, consisting of armed personnel of 15 member states, to defend the South. When they started to make progress, the Chinese government intervened and the balance in the war shifted again.

July 27, 1953: An armistice was agreed upon, creating the DMZ and enforcing a ceasefire between the two nations. Peace did not come, thus the two countries officially remained at war.

April 1954: The peace talks in Geneva fail. Representatives of the USA and China fail to come to an agreement and the stalemate from the armistice continues.

January and May 2003: The DPRK withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and later withdraws from an agreement with the ROK to keep the Korean peninsula clear of nuclear weaponry.

October 9, 2006: The DPRK announces that it has successfully tested nuclear weaponry.

January 6, 2007: The DPRK officially recognises that it has nuclear weapons.

December 12, 2012: The DPRK violates its ban on ballistic missile testing by launching an observation spacecraft into space.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

The Geneva talks have been conducted in the year 1954. One of the goals was to get a permanent peace treaty for the Korean peninsula. They have been fruitless and the result was that the stalemate at the DMZ continued up till now.

The UNSC has tried multiple times to impose sanctions on the DPRK. Examples of these are the unanimous passing of resolution 2094 in which penalties on North Korean banking, travel and trade are imposed and the also unanimous passing of resolution 2270 which further increased sanctions and also condemned the development of weapons of mass destruction. The circumstances on the peninsula doesn't seem to have improved after the passing of these resolutions. One consequence of the resolution is that the economy of the DPRK is suffering, but it remains unknown to what extent that really solves the crisis.

Possible Solutions

There are a couple of possible solutions of which I'm only going to discuss two. One is an economical solution to the problem. The DPRK is a country that needs foreign currency to keep its economy standing and to pay for their nuclear program. It doesn't have many income sources and that makes it not too difficult to immobilise the economy. An all-out ban on tourism to the DPRK, a ban on international trade with the DPRK and a ban on the purchasing of blueprints of North-Korean weapons could potentially help shattering the economy. This will, however, have its consequences on the population and may therefore lead to many civilian victims.

The second option could be to enter peace negotiations, which can aim to secure a permanent two state solution. These peace talks can of course also include a section modelled after the Iranian nuclear deal. This will probably prove to be most effective when trying to disarm parties involved in the conflict. The question remains if this is a workable solution, due to the fact that the DPRK has dire relations with the outside world.

Appendix/Appendices

- <http://www.hmun.nl/>
- <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/>
- <http://nationalinterest.org/search/site/north%20korea>
- <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/UN-Security-Council-Resolutions-on-North-Korea>
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>