

United States and North Korea Nuclear Tension and the Politics of Power Relation and Global Security

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Abstract: *The nuclear tension between the United States and North Korea has been a focal point of international relations and global security for decades. This tension arises from North Korea's persistent pursuit of nuclear capabilities and the United States' efforts to curb this ambition through diplomatic, economic, and military strategies. The interplay of power politics is evident in the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies, North Korea's strategic provocations, and the periodic yet fragile negotiations aimed at denuclearization. The study explores the historical context of the US-North Korea nuclear standoff, examining key events and policies that have shaped the current landscape. It also analyzes the broader implications for global security, including the role of international organizations, the impact on regional stability in East Asia, and the potential for nuclear proliferation. By understanding the dynamics of power relations and the strategic interests of both nations, these abstract aims to provide a comprehensive overview of one of the most critical security challenges in contemporary international politics.*

Keywords: United States, North Korea, nuclear tension, politics, power relation, global security

INTRODUCTION

North Korea spans 46,541 square miles and has a population of 25,490,965, with Pyongyang as its capital (World Bank, 2017). It is bordered to the north by China and to the south by Russia and South Korea. North Korea's strategic location between the South China Sea and the East China Sea makes it geopolitically significant, serving as a critical transport route between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and to Japan and other North Pacific seaports. Conversely, the United States, a federal republic consisting of fifty states, is based in Washington D.C. Covering an area of 3,531,837 square miles and housing a population of 331,002,651, the U.S. includes Alaska and Hawaii, extending its reach from North America to the mid-Pacific Ocean. The continental U.S. is

bordered by Canada to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Gulf of Mexico to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west (Owen, 2021). Nuclear weapons symbolize destruction, security, and power. North Korea's nuclear program has become a global security concern due to its advancements in nuclear and ballistic missile technology aimed at achieving credible nuclear deterrence. This development has strained its relations with neighboring countries and major world powers (Milani, 2018). North Korea's nuclear ambitions date back to 1962 during the Cold War, with the government committing to "all-fortressization," initiating the hyper-militarized state seen today (Dominguez, 2015). In 1992, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) revealed North Korea's nuclear activities were more extensive than declared, leading to its withdrawal from the IAEA in 1994. Although the U.S. and North Korea negotiated the Agreed Framework to halt Pyongyang's nuclear activities in exchange for energy assistance and light water reactors, the agreement collapsed by 2002 (Fischer, 1997). North Korea withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003. At the June 2018 summit, Kim Jong-Un reaffirmed his commitment to denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, albeit with ambiguous terms (Lewis, 2018).

No agreement on dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons has been reached. North Korea remains a significant threat to global peace and security due to its leader's stance and the ongoing deterioration of the global security environment (Pompeo, 2018). The possibility of superpower confrontations and nuclear weapon use makes nuclear disarmament essential (Ryan, 2014). North Korea's nuclear program is claimed to establish equilibrium with U.S. forces (Alcaro, 2017). The 2010 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference emphasized reducing the use of nuclear weapons and encouraging their total elimination (Ryan, 2014). North Korea's international portrayal has been harsh, drawing global attention and daily discussions in major capitals.

U.S. administrations from Bill Clinton to Donald Trump have attempted to address North Korea's nuclear program. Despite efforts, including bilateral talks, threats, and sanctions, no administration has succeeded in rolling back North Korea's nuclear weapons development. Pyongyang's strategic nuclear weapons program remains complex and challenging (Rennack, 2006). North Korea's third nuclear test in 2013 escalated tensions but reaffirmed its intention to retain nuclear weapons. The stalled Six-Party Talks (2003-2009), involving China, North Korea, the U.S., South Korea, Russia, and Japan, aimed at denuclearization but achieved limited success (Davenport, 2018a). Post-Korean War, U.S. and North Korea had minimal diplomatic contact. Despite various U.S. administrations employing a mix of diplomatic engagement, sanctions, and threats, North Korea's nuclear arsenal has grown, emphasizing military security for regime survival (Goodby, 2003). U.S. policies towards North Korea, in alliance with South Korea, have focused on deterring conflict and preventing nuclear weapons development. However, North Korea demands the removal of U.S. forces from South Korea, lifting of sanctions, recognition as a nuclear state, and a peace treaty. The absence of a meaningful bilateral treaty or understanding between the U.S. and North Korea continues to be a concern.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine United States and North Korea nuclear tension and the politics of power relation and global security, while the specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. examine the motivations for North Korea's acquisition of Nuclear capability
- ii. analyse United States' interest in the North Korea's Nuclear weapon's development.
- iii. identify the politics between the U.S. and North Korea power implication for global security.

Research Questions

Against the backdrop of the prevailing stalemate between the United States of America and North Korea, the study considered the following research questions:

- i. What are the motivations of North Korea's acquisition of Nuclear capability?
- ii. Why is the United States interested in the North Korea's Nuclear weapons development?
- iii. What are the conflicts of interests between the U.S. and North Korea implication for global security?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Security

Just like peace, identity and other terms in the area of international political theory, security has attracted several definitions. Nevertheless, a good number of authorities view the term security from their own diverse ideologies. This has made the definition of security, broad. If defining security is this difficult, there is little wonder why operating within its jurisdiction is very fluid. Also, people and governments have taken actions where projected and unforeseen outcomes turned out difficult to grip, all in the name of security. Due to its obvious lack of conceptual boundary, security has been employed to attract and lash patronage for many political endeavours both at the state and international levels of politicking. Hence, Williams (2008) argued that security is a powerful political tool in claiming attention for critical issues in the quest for attention from the government. Makinda (1998) defined security as the preservation of the norms, rules, institutions and values of society. He argued that all the organisations, rules and structures associated with society, including its people are to be protected from military and non-military threats. The term, preservation, as an integral aspect of this definition, assumes some level of conscious, intentional and definite steps and actions. Thus, the conscious understanding of the leadership of a society decides its actions and guides its efforts, which ultimately becomes obvious in all facets of the security agenda of that society.

The term security can be also defined as a 'freedom from fear'; which can range from fear of disease, hunger, and terror. It can also have the connotation of freedom from threat. The theoretical conceptualisation of security, in the field of International Relations and Security studies, is based

on two major schools of thought; traditional security and non-traditional security. Supporters of traditional approach of securitisation refer to the state security as the key element. Realists like Niccollo Machiavelli, Hans Morgenthau, Walter Lippmann, and Kenneth Waltz support the traditional security paradigm while defining state as the unit of international system and main object. Lippmann in Baylis, Smith & Owens (2001) viewed security as, “a nation is to the point to which it is not exposed to danger or of having to relinquish its core values if it decides to avoid war, and is capable, if pushed into it, to maintain them by coming out victorious in such a war’.

Traditional security emphasises only on the dangers as it has to do with the survival of the state other than actors of the society. The traditional concept of security is state centred and its centre esteem is to pick up the security device of the state from all sorts of dangers that imperil its sway, region and its presence (Abari & Ogroh, 2021). In the 1990’s, the non-traditional security school of thought on security studies emphasised the need for human security in the area of security studies. Human security requires concerted efforts to create norms, process and institutions that effectively address uncertainties (Abari & Ogroh, 2021). The advocates of this area, who have been inspired by the liberal school of thought, emphasised on the other angles of security. They emphasised more on human security issues and agree that the security model should also emphasise human values too. Buzan (1999) defined security as, been about the quest for freedom from all forms of threat and the proactiveness of states and societies to maintain their independence, their core identities and their integrity against external forces.

Concept of Global Security

Global security was birthed out of the need that diverse activities, particularly globalization, have posed great exposures to states. These are calls that no country’s security network has the capacity to handle crisis on its own, hence, the call for total cooperation amongst states. The global interconnectivity and dependence of states in the international system since the end of the Cold War has made it imperative for states to be more cooperative and work hand in hand.

Global security thus, consists of the measures adopted by nations and international Organizations for the purpose of mutual peace and harmony as well as survival. These measures include military actions and diplomatic agreements such as treaties and conventions.

Global security in the current context has become the expression of building new international relations, amended in turn, by the globalisation phenomenon (David, 2008) or the fragmentation, and it identifies with the protection of everything that affects the very foundations of states and international security organisations (David, 2008). There has been a remarkable consensus on redefining the parameters of global security since the start of the new century. This consensus stems largely from the post-Cold War coalescence around the centrality of human security and the popular idea of development as freedom. Both conceptions denote the indivisible nature of socio-economic, political and environmental security in the age of globalization. The decisive turn in the

new conceptions of global security came with the post-Cold War perspectives on human security, attempts to transcend the previous fixation with state and military security by restoring the centrality of individuals, groups and societies in the security enterprise (Hampson, 2002).

Despite the longevity of this classic vision upon global security, something has changed in the international environment with the end of the Cold War, something so significant that it caused a total rethinking of the concept of security. With the end of the confrontation of the Cold War between two great global powers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, in 1989, the classical vision upon security is increasingly challenged and replaced eventually with a modern vision upon security.

In global security, states fight to secure their roles as central agents of security; nonetheless, the focal attention is less on the protecting itself as a standard procedure than on the preservation of the norms, ethos, and institutions of an international society (McDonald, 2004). Global security is perceived as the preservation of the ethos of an international society; it is to be accomplished by states in working in collaboration via international institutions; and possible threats to her security are conceived as anything undermining the normative structure of an international society. Central to realizing these ends are international institutions as well as good states (Lawler, 2005). Good states are those states that abide by an unrestrained view of the international system aimed at strengthening collaborations among states and the organisations of an international society, and that equally strides towards finding equitable and sustainable solutions to pressing transnational challenges (Dunne and McDonald, 2013).

Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Nuclear weapons technology and its military applicability marked a major milestone in international relations, and the way wars are conducted. For many countries, these nuclear weapons technology will constantly be a status symbol that creates a noticeable distinction between the haves and those who do not. The proliferation of nuclear weapons requires very sophisticated and highly developed scientific community, an asset not every country has or can afford. Nuclear weapons technology has instilled a form of political and technological determinism in global affairs (Howlett & Simpson, 2005). Once a state has acquired nuclear technology, it is likely to develop it via a dedicated nuclear programme, conduct tests, produce weapons, stockpile such weapons and, in worse- case scenario, employ these weapons.

Nuclear technology and weapons changed diplomatic practices during and since the Cold War came to an end. Proliferation has become more dynamic and complex than ever before. Presently, states and non-state actors are propelled by a wide range of reasons or motivations to possess nuclear weapons and technology. These are ideology, domestic political factors and encouragements from a refined scientific community, discouraging and stopping interventions by a neighbour and/or other actors, domestic and bilateral bargaining, and a state's level of threat

perception. Major complications arise when some countries (such as Libya and South Africa) give up their nuclear identity and interests by voluntarily “denuclearizing”, or totally dismantling their nuclear weapons programme and/or their application of nuclear technology (as was the situation of Germany) (Howlett & Simpson, 2005).

From the history of nuclear weapons development and the doctrines of post Cold War United States of America’s administrations, including failed policy (Cirincione, 2013) tells a story of numerous and variegated policy changes from North America to Russia and Eurasia, to India, China and North Korea; there have been a tremendous number of actors involved in dialogue about nuclear weapons and the threat they pose. During this period, we see a weakening of a non-proliferation regime, a massive reorientation of the United States of America’s strategic posture from the Bush era to the Obama era, and we are now at a moment of potential global steps towards non-proliferation made possible through the Non-Proliferation Treaty (Cirincione, 2013).

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Most states recognize the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Even during the Cold War, the USSR and America cooperated in an effort to prevent other countries from possessing nuclear weapons. In the 1960s, they helped draft the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a landmark international treaty which objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to encourage peaceful relations in the use of nuclear energy and to promote the prospects of achieving a total and complete disarmament of the world. The Treaty stands as the only binding agreement with total commitment in a multilateral treaty with the aim of a complete disarmament by states that are in possession of nuclear-weapons. This treaty was negotiated by a United Nations-sponsored organization (Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament between 1965 and 1968), based in Geneva, Switzerland. After its inaugural signing in 1968, the Treaty came into force in 1970. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely.

The treaty thus, defines states with nuclear-weapons as those states who before 1 January, 1967, have developed and demonstrated their nuclear devices; they are; the United States of America, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China, North Korea, Israel, India and Pakistan. These states are in full possession of nuclear and ballistic weapons. India, Pakistan, and North Korea have publicly declared they have nuclear capability and further tested these weapons, while Israel has remained vague regarding its ballistic and nuclear weapons status.

The NPT is frequently seen to be founded on a central bargain: its non-nuclear-weapon states have accepted never to embark on a quest for nuclear weapons and the NPT nuclear-weapon states in exchange for this, have also agreed to share the gains of peaceful nuclear technology in form of nuclear power points, etcetera, and to encourage nuclear weapons disarmaments geared at the total

and absolute elimination of their nuclear warheads. At every five years, this treaty is reviewed at the Review Conferences of the signatories to the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The United States of America- North Korea nuclear relations

North Korea has been a vexing United States of America's foreign policy problem since 1950. Pyongyang has sought to develop a nuclear capability for over forty years and in September 2003, declared its possession of nuclear weapons (Kim, 2003). The Clinton administration made plans for war against North Korea during the 1994 nuclear crisis. While the United States believed they could undoubtedly win, however, they also understood war involves many casualties.



Plate 2.1. A photo released by Korean Central News Agency, former United States of America's President, Bill Clinton, seated left, meets with former North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il, seated right, in Pyongyang, on August 4, 2009.

President Bill Clinton's negotiations took a resilient stance in its sessions with Pyongyang, including alerting her of serious negative consequences if she went ahead in pursuit of an unacceptable missile programme. About this same period, the Clinton's government decided flexibility was crucial given the volatility of events, as well as the prospects that a starving North Korea might create a dangerously chaotic situation. While some states were considering the need to possess these weapons, others like the United States of America grew adamant all through this period of being a nuclear weapons power state. Thus, Nicols (2013), exposed some of the nuclear policies undertaken by Clinton who feared that American citizens are believed to be at imminent danger from the more possible threats of nuclear terrorism, nuclear arms proliferation or unexpected nuclear use (Nicols, 2013). Yet, America retained its nuclear arsenal.

However, the denuclearisation of North Korea requires the United States of America's leadership. The United States of America's disengagement from talks with Pyongyang contributes to instability of the East Asian region. Thus, to Gard (2011), the strategic patience policy became no longer viable. For him, it was just a formula for continued deadlock and danger which the President Obama's administration needed to break and fake the diplomatic initiatives to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem.



Plate 2.3. North Korean President, Kim Jong-Un and his American counterpart, President Donald Trump, shake hands at the start of the Summit in Singapore on June 12, 2018.

Furthermore, the United States of America's President, Donald Trump during a trip to Asia publicly urged the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-Un to "come to the table" to negotiate over the country's nuclear programme, as he pressed regional leaders to mount more economic pain on the Pyongyang regime. Although, his rhetoric during the trip was less aggressive than recent statements and tweets, Trump still did not lay a strategy for engagement and continued to send mixed signals about what America wants to see from North Korea before engaging in talks. What kind of North Korean policy will the Trump administration adopt under its neo-isolationism and 'America First Principle' (Park, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed historical research design. The study was hinged on the evaluation of available secondary data and general information to establish facts, trends and to draw conclusion based on the arguments and views of different authorities in the field of nuclear proliferation, politics, global security and particularly, the United States of America-North Korea nuclear relations. This aided in finding answers to the research questions posited. The research was basically analytical and qualitative, utilizing vital and related secondary materials to generate data for analysis through historical process.

The study adopted qualitative method of data collection, which included; textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines, government documents, conference papers, articles and internet materials. Articulations of these useful materials helped to improve on the outcome of this study. We also made physical contact with the United States of America and North Korean Consuls respectively, Delta State University library, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos and Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies of the University of Ibadan. For ease of access to relevant internet materials, we subscribed to JSTOR online digital library of academic journals, books and primary sources.

The study was descriptive in approach and deductive logic was adopted to provide us with a balanced platform for the conduct of a critical analysis. Postulations were drawn from inferences derived from reviewed literature and the disposition of available secondary data. These inferences helped us in establishing specific recommendations based on our findings.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What are motivations of North Korea's acquisition of Nuclear capability?

North Korea in January 2016 conducted a nuclear weapons test which went against international rules. This test was the fourth tests she has conducted and it's the very first time Pyongyang claimed to have been in possession of thermonuclear or hydrogen explosive. A month later, she launched a long range ballistic trajectory telling the world that she now has the technological might to target any nation on earth.

North Korea's the KN-14 missile has been estimated to have a range between five thousand (5,000) to six thousand (6,000) miles, causing concern to not only the United States of America, but globally as well. Washington, Tokyo and Seoul have deployed Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) systems to protect their territory and military forces from the threat of North Korean attacks. During the 2009 and 2012 North Korean long-range missile tests, America and its allied forces reportedly made ready and available a number of BMD systems, in addition to the intelligence gathering capabilities sent into the region (Lovelace, 2017). Japan deployed Patriot interceptor batteries around Tokyo and on its south-western islands, in the event of an errant missile or debris headed toward Japanese territory and Aegis BMD ships deployed to the area as well. In response to the heightened tensions in spring of 2013, the United States of America's military accelerated deployment of a ground-based Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) BMD system to Guam, two years ahead of schedule (Lovelace, 2017). These missile tests by Pyongyang have not only provided insights into the advanced level of technology she possesses, but a continuation of her aggressive foreign policy, the demonstration of technology, the character and ideology of her leader; all these which indicates that she has officially become a legitimate threat to global peace and security.

Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic weapons ambitions have sent security shockwaves not just across Northeast Asia, but globally. The present non-nuclear weapons states in Northeast Asia may be provoked by North Korea to embark on their own nuclear weapons programme. When this nuclear cascade eventually commences, it will begin with Japan who has been reconsidering its nuclear option closely followed by South Korea's reaction to the change of stance by both North Korea and Japan. Then, a possible further upgrading by China of its nuclear capabilities, in reaction to a nuclear-powered Japan and Korean Peninsula might then trigger renewed interest by Taiwan in a nuclear weapons capacity (Hughes, 2007).

Research Question 2: Why is the U.S. interested in the North Korea's Nuclear weapons development?

In the summer of 1950, the United Nations under the auspices of the United States intervened in the Korean Peninsula conflict after North Korean forces, backed by Chinese and Soviet Union support, invaded South Korea. After a unanimous vote from the Security Council of 9-0 on intervening, the United States-led twenty-one of the United Nations member states troops and supplies to support South Korean military operations (Educator Resources, 2016). Following strict UN guidance on troop intervention, President Truman justified the necessity of contributing troops into the peninsula as a combined United Nations military effort. This enabled him (President Truman) to declare the conflict not as war, but as a United Nations led "police action" on directives of the Security Council allowing him to circumvent Congressional approval (Myers,2019).

U.S. interests in North Korea encompass a range of crucial security, economic, and political concerns. Bilateral military alliances with South Korea and Japan obligate the United States to defend these allies from any attack from the North. Tens of thousands of U.S. troops occupying the largest U.S. military bases in the Pacific are stationed within proven striking range of North Korean missiles. An outbreak of conflict on the Korean peninsula or the collapse of the government in Pyongyang would have severe implications for trade and the regional—if not global—economy. Negotiations and diplomacy surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapons programme shape U.S. relations with all the major powers in the region and have become a particularly complicating factor for Sino-U.S. ties. At the center of this complicated intersection of geostrategic interests is the task of negotiating with an isolated authoritarian regime.

Upon establishment of the United Nations, Article One of the UN charter outlined the preservation of international peace and security agreed upon by the Security Council. During this period, the Security Council condemned Soviet endeavours to spread communism to other parts of their neighbouring countries. During the Korean conflict, China was yet to be admitted into the United Nations and the Soviet Union vacated their seat in the Security Council. The absence of these two nations allowed the UN to enter the Korean Peninsula (Myers, 2019). Without the Soviet Union to veto any actions taken by the United Nations Security Council and the United Nation's substantial interest in the Korean peninsula, the Security Council found it easy to gain support to intervene in

the conflict. The United Nations Security Council resolution which outlined the intervention in Korea asked for member states to self-determine their contributions to the conflict whether it was with troops, supplies, or both. Additionally, the Security Council asked Washington to take the strategic lead in the conflict by establishing a unified command for the conflict as it had the preponderance of strategic interest in the region (Goodrich, 1953). This was the United Nation's first intervention in North Korea.

Research Question 3: What are examine the conflict of interests/confrontation between the U.S. and North Korea implication for global security

Pyongyang has consistently outlined its demands from the United States; although, the details of these demands have evolved over time. Pyongyang has repeatedly called for cordial bilateral relations with Washington and most importantly, to sign a peace treaty that will bring an end to the United States' hostile policy. According to Robertson (2003), Negotiators from North Korean negotiators have described this situation as a mixture of;

- i. Economic sanctions or the deliberate withholding of economic grants and assistance;
- ii. A critique of Pyongyang and its institutions, particularly a critique of the country's human rights record or abuses directed at the ruling Kim Jong Il family;
- iii. And, not forgetting military threats, especially the constant joint military exercises between Washington and Seoul, as well as threats (those spoken or those that were implicit) of United States of America's use of nuclear warheads in an event of a conflict (Robertson, 2003).

Each United States of America administration has preserved the stated goal of achieving a complete and total denuclearization of North Korea through every means possible, especially via diplomatic means, which she has exhibited in varying degrees by trying to engage in talks with North Korea over its nuclear and ballistic weapons programme. The projected human cost of a full-scale military confrontation with North Korea where expectations of the number of casualties range in the hundreds of thousands of innocent lives, or in the millions if nuclear and ballistic weapons are to be deployed, has ultimately cast a dark shadow over the possible option of using military force to denuclearize the country at all cost (Robertson, 2003). Policies geared towards regime change through non-military avenues would have to boldly take the risks of goading the collapse of a nuclear and ballistic weapons-armed state and to reckon with the surmounting difficult fact that the North Korean regime is willing to do all it takes, even if it means imposing maximum level of pain on its populace just to stay in power. Recognition or partial acceptance of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons-armed status, would portray an embarrassing withdrawal from years of American policy and an unfortunate setback to the global non-proliferation regime, without any form of guarantees that it may metamorphose to a more stable and peaceful Korean Peninsula (Wertz, 2018).

Pyongyang is desperate for some sort of de facto recognition of its nuclear weapons status and legitimacy as a nuclear-armed state, similar to other nuclear weapons-armed states outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty such as Pakistan. North Korea, however, has said it has support for “the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” but this has rather been too ambiguous because the term seems to have a rather different interpretation in Pyongyang than it does all over the world (Wertz, 2018). The “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” as described by an official of North Korea in 2013 means, “totally expunging the United States of America nuclear threat to North Korea,” with an eventual North Korean nuclear disarmament to come in the context of international peace efforts“ so as to achieve a complete and total denuclearization of the world” (Wertz, 2018).

Although much of the debates by the United States of America about North Korea describes the country’s leadership and its quest for nuclear weapons as lacking sense, reason and totally bizarre. Over the years, Pyongyang has sought to regularize bilateral relations with Washington in order to guarantee its security and regime survival and to reduce or possibly avoid her dependence on China as a patron-client relationship. In its early years, Pyongyang’s ballistic and nuclear weapons acquisition programme was mainly useful as a means to an end in achieving this sole objectives, but she missed very important opportunities and the wrongheaded actions and decision by Washington in 2002 to ditch the Agreed Framework seems to have pushed North Korea to aggressively embark on a more robust nuclear deterrent (Cumings, 2004). Subsequent Washington policies based on sticks in the form of economic sanctions and shows of military might have been misleading, worsening North Korea’s believe of possible external threat while inciting her predisposition to intensify her quest in response to external pressure. Nevertheless, Kim Jong-Un’s obvious dedication to economic growth, development and modernization, also matched with his maximum-level of outreach to the United States, China and South Korea, perhaps may have resulted to a fresh round of meaningful new opportunities for renegotiations (Cumings, 2004).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

North Korea's relentless pursuit of nuclear capabilities, epitomized by the hydrogen bomb test in January 2016, is driven by a complex interplay of motivations. Central to these motivations is the regime's desire for security and survival. North Korea perceives nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrent against external threats, particularly from the United States. This perception is deeply rooted in the historical context of the Korean War and the enduring military tensions that followed. The regime also uses its nuclear arsenal to bolster internal power, presenting itself as the defender of the nation against foreign adversaries, thereby enhancing national pride and unity. In addition to security, strategic leverage is a significant factor. North Korea views its nuclear capabilities as a powerful bargaining chip in international negotiations, seeking economic concessions, aid, and political recognition. By showcasing its technological advancements through nuclear and missile tests, North Korea aims to assert its influence in Northeast Asia and challenge the regional strategic

balance. This show of strength is intended to signal its capabilities to potential adversaries and gain respect on the global stage.

The United States' interest in North Korea's nuclear weapons program is multifaceted. One of the primary drivers is the defense of its allies, South Korea and Japan. The U.S. is obligated by military alliances to protect these nations from North Korean threats. The presence of U.S. troops and military assets in the region underscores the importance of deterring North Korean aggression and maintaining regional stability, which is crucial for global trade and economic prosperity. North Korean provocations threaten this stability, prompting the U.S. to respond robustly. Furthermore, the U.S. is committed to upholding the global non-proliferation regime. North Korea's nuclear tests and its withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) challenge this regime and raise concerns about a potential nuclear arms race in the region. The situation also complicates U.S.-China relations. While China remains a key ally of North Korea, it recognizes the destabilizing effects of Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. The U.S. must navigate this complex dynamic while addressing the North Korean threat, reassessing its strategic posture in Asia to balance deterrence with diplomatic efforts.

The ongoing confrontation between the U.S. and North Korea has profound implications for global security. There is a significant risk of escalation, with the potential for miscalculation or accidental conflict leading to a military confrontation. The high human and economic costs of such a conflict necessitate careful management of the situation. North Korea's nuclear advancements could also trigger a regional arms race, prompting Japan, South Korea, and potentially Taiwan to reconsider their own nuclear options in response to perceived threats. Diplomatically, the situation presents numerous challenges. Despite multiple efforts, achieving a lasting resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue remains elusive. Each U.S. administration has struggled to find the right balance of sanctions, incentives, and diplomatic engagement. Recognizing North Korea as a nuclear state without substantial concessions undermines the global non-proliferation regime and sets a dangerous precedent for other states, potentially weakening efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. Humanitarian concerns also play a role in this complex issue. Economic sanctions, while intended to pressure the regime, often exacerbate the suffering of the North Korean population. Balancing the need to curb the regime's nuclear ambitions with humanitarian considerations is a delicate challenge that requires a nuanced approach.

CONCLUSION

As the brief discussion of various aspects of North Korea suggests, North Korea is a country with the technological and military capacity to cause significant problems in East Asia, the Pacific region and the world in general. Its regime appears to be more than slightly paranoid and irrational. Given these existential realities, one could say it is possible that war may not break out in Peninsula, yet, Pyongyang is going to keep American, South Korean and Japanese military leaders

as well as key policymakers very busy for as long as this government is able to pin them down, while continually suppressing its citizens, and thus fighting for the continued survival of its regime. The conduct of the United States of America's diplomacy may be complicated by competition from other powers, although that competition will probably be limited by political and economic realities. China is ever ready to provide help to North Korea, but North Korea will tarry on with its suspicions of every generosity from China. More so, despite the fact that China has still not approved of America's involvement in the affairs of the Peninsula, most importantly, its future ambition on the Peninsula, Beijing is still willing to collaborate with America for the purpose of easing the already exploded tensions. Part of the reason for this is because Beijing is on a disadvantaged position due to the cumbersome domestic politics of engagement which she had employed several years ago during her occupation of North Korea.

Comprehensively, the contest between states is not only restricted to economic and political actuality, but also by allotting functions at reconciliations, instead of one country monopolizing the role as the America is perceived to be indulging in today. Most important to note is that, this type of assistance could stumble if rapprochement is seen to be headed towards reunification, because not every country is desirous for a unified North and South Korea, but this is obviously not in the equation for anytime in the nearest future. In short, speculation about this contest among state may be overstated, but improved participation by other countries will require an elaborate administrative function for Washington and pressure for the government to inaugurate a workable "concert of powers" while dealing with any rivalries. The United Nations has also failed to stop North Korea from advancing its nuclear and ballistic missiles agenda because of strategic failures of key member states as well as underestimating Pyongyang's abilities to fight through international sanctions.

Recommendations

Hinged on the existential realities, the following recommendations have been made;

1. A return to Six-Party Talks. The United States-North Korea-China has become a prominent mechanism for managing regional crises in the short term and for shaping a future security structure in North East Asia over the long term. An improved collaboration and synchronization among The United States-North Korea-China three could head to an efficient diplomatic strategy to towards the denuclearisation of North Korea.
2. In pursuing engagement with Pyongyang, Washington policymakers must at all times, remember that managing ever changing situation on the Peninsula demands molding more efficient policymaking strategies inside its Executive, together with the Congress and most importantly with North Korean allies.
3. The United Nations economic pressure on North Korea without creating an off ramp through negotiations is increasingly dangerous. It may not be too late to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons acquisitions, but use of pressure will not force Kim Jong-Un to disarm.

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