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North Korea's Defiant Quest for Nuclear Armament and Implications for Global Peace and Security in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The joint statement issued sequel to the outcome of the Six-Party Talks of 2005 involving China, North Korea, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States with a view to achieving a verifiable and peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the maintenance of peace and stability in the region has increasingly become elusive. The expectation was that series of the United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions would persuade North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and refrain from ballistic missile tests in exchanged for humanitarian aid. On the contrary, it appears that these measures have largely proved abortive as the country has not only continuously but defiantly carried out successive nuclear and ballistic missile tests in the 21st century. This study, therefore, critically investigated why North Korea has chosen the path of defiant nuclear armament despite international condemnations and sanctions; it also examined its implications for peace, stability and security in the Korea Peninsula and by extension, the international community. The study dwelt on secondary data and used content analysis for data presentation and discussion. Theory of Balance of Power was used to explain states behaviour in international relations and how power rivalry dominates the system. The study shows that North Korea is the only state that had conducted nuclear tests in the 21st century and the only United Nations member state that had routinely threatened other nations with nuclear annihilation. It identified the particular incidence of periodic joint United States-South Korea military drills in the Korea Peninsula as an overt catalyst to nuclear tension in the region. The study thus recommended a more concerted, intensified and ideologically unbiased efforts by the UN Security Council and all member-states towards ensuring North Korea's full compliance to treaties, conventions and obligations relating to ban on nuclear proliferation. Failure to advance this course would impair the treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, trigger arms race in the region and jeopardize global peace and security.

Keywords: Defiant, Nuclear Armament, Global Peace, Security, 21st Century.

Introduction

From the division of the Korean peninsula and the creation of North Korea in 1945 up till 1991, Moscow was its ally and sponsor. The Soviets provided North Korea with huge amounts of economic aid and security assistance propping up the country (Beauchamp, 2016). As a superpower patron, the Soviets also

provided North Korea with diplomatic and military support. When the Soviet Union began collapsing in 1989 and ultimately dissolved in 1991, North Korea was left in a precarious position. Thus, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea lost its main protector and its turn to developing nuclear weapons became inevitable.

Essentially in retrospect, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, otherwise known as North Korea began developing the institutional capability to train personnel for its nuclear programme in the early 1950s (Karouf, 2000). In December 1952, the government established the Atomic Energy Research Institute and nuclear activities began to progress when North Korea subsequently and effectively established Co-operative Agreements with the Soviet Union (Jong-ik, 1999; Jong-hun, 2002). Sequel to this, the Soviet Union in the early 1960s provided extensive technical assistance to North Korea in constructing the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Centre which included the installation of a Soviet IRT-2000 nuclear research reactor and associated facilities.

Although bolstered by each assistance from Moscow and to some extent Beijing, North Korea's nuclear programme developed largely without significant foreign assistance. Reportedly, the then Supreme Leader of North Korea Kim II Sung asked Beijing to share its nuclear weapons technology following China's first nuclear test in October 1964, but Chinese leader Mao Zedong refused (Bermudez, 1991). Accordingly, Jun-ik (1991) notes that the early 1980s was a period of significant indigenous expansion, when North Korea constructed uranium milling facilities, fuel rod fabrication complex and a 5MW(e) nuclear reactor as well as research development institutions. Simultaneously, North Korea began experimenting with the high explosives tests required for building the triggering of a nuclear bomb. By the end of mid 1980s, Pyongyang had begun constructing a 50MW(e) nuclear reactor in Yongbyon while also expanding its uranium processing facilities.

Meanwhile, North Korea agreed to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state in December, 1985 in exchange for Soviet assistance for constructing four Light Water Reactors (LWRs) (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016; Oberdofer, 1997). Sequel to this, the country proceeded to sign an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement on 30th January, 1992. Under the terms of the agreement, North Korea provided an initial declaration of its nuclear facilities and materials and provided access for IAEA inspectors to verify the completeness and correctness of its initial declaration. However, subsequent IAEA analysis indicated that North Korea technicians had reprocessed plutonium on three occasions in 1989, 1990 and 1991. When the agency requested access to two suspected nuclear waste sites, North Korea declared the sites to be military sites and therefore, off-limits (Jong-hun, 2002). In reaction to this, the United States suspended heavy oil shipments to the country and North Korea retaliated by lifting the freeze on its nuclear facilities, expelled IAEA inspectors and announced its withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT) in January 2003 (Hirsh et al, 2006; Washington Post, 2006).

The subsequent years following the dawn of the 21st century witnessed a total violation of moratorium on nuclear proliferation by North Korea. The country declared the Six-Party Talks Agreement void and conducted its first nuclear weapon test in 2006. It carried out second test in 2009; third test in 2013; and fourth and fifth tests in 2016 and sixth test believed to be hydrogen bomb in September 2017 (Parry, 2009; Choe, 2015; The Telegraph 2016; Korea Central News Agency, 2017). Despite international pressures, UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions, North Korea insists it has right to acquire nuclear weapons. Under the new administration of President Donald Trump of the United States, North Korea has in similar manner demonstrated its unwillingness to stop nuclear armament and ballistic missile launch, citing the annual joint military drills between South Korea and the United States as one of many provocations. Berlinger *et al* (2017) noted that since February 2017, North Korea has fired 21 missiles during 14 tests; further perfecting its technology, including an unprecedented firing of ballistic missile over Japan on 29th August 2017; a development which the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe denounced as a most serious and grave threat to his country.

It is against this background that this study sets to investigate the fundamental motives behind North Korea's continuous defiant nuclear armament despite United Nations Security Council sanctions and international pressures. Apart from identifying these motives, the study will critically examine the implications of North Korea's actions on regional and international peace and security.

Statement of the Problem

It was anticipated particularly by the United States and South Korea that Kim Jong-un's rise to power in 2011 following the death of his father Kim Jong-il, would result in a change in North Korea's behaviour. On the contrary, few months after taking over power, the new North Korean leader delivered a bellicose speech which clearly suggested a resort to military actions against South Korea, US and Japan as a way of consolidating his grip on power. Though North Korea announced in February 2012, that it would suspend uranium enrichment at the Yongbyon nuclear scientific research centre and not to conduct further nuclear test following the reaffirmation of the agreement reached during the 2007 Six-Party talks involving North Korea, South Korea, the United States, Japan, China and Russia, it(North Korea) conducted a long-range missile test in April 2012, and the US decided not to proceed with the aid agreement and the talks once more collapsed (Kessler, 2008; Myers et al, 2012).

Specifically, a UN Sanctions Committee report stated that North Korea operates an international smuggling network for nuclear and ballistic missile technology and listed Syria and Iran as export partners (McElroy, 2010; Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2010; Broad W. J. et al, 2010). Over the years, North Korea's persistent tests of nuclear bombs and ballistic missiles has severally pushed the Korean Peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war and by extension a global military catastrophe that would pitch United States against China and Russia. UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions as well as threats from the United States have all

failed to deter North Korea from nuclear armament proliferation activities.

From the foregoing, Kelly (2017) aptly asserts that there is just really no good option about North Korea. Corroborating this view, Jeffrey Lewis, a non-proliferation expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies maintains that if you attack them (North Korea) after they have the nuclear weapons, it's not a preventive war. It's just a plain old nuclear war (BBC, 2017). In the same vein, the position of North Korea's allies over the nuclear impasse is not quite certain and thus making the subject matter worrisome. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned the United States and its allies against going down a dead-end road on North Korea and called for talks to resolve the issue. China has maintained its tacit support for Pyongyang despite occasional criticisms as it fears a complete collapse of the North Korean regime could lead to Korean unification with US soldiers heavily based in a country with a land border with China. It is also thought that China is also concerned at the prospect of millions of North Korean refugees crossing the border.

Conversely, United States President Donald Trump has repeatedly maintained that China has great influence over North Korea and must decide to call the leadership in Pyongyang to order, but China's criticism merely serve for formalities as it keeps urging the relevant parties to refrain from taking actions that may further escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula (Kim and Park, 2016; Melvin and Sciatto, 2016).

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The theoretical framework adopted for a critical analysis and explanation of the study is the Balance of Power theory. Balance of Power (BOP) is a derivative of both classical realism and neorealist theories of international relations. The balance of power theory seeks to explain how states can successfully achieve their national security interests in the anarchic international system where direct rules do not apply. Due to the neorealist idea of anarchism as a result of the international system, states must ensure their survival through maintaining or increasing their power in a self-help world. Scholars associated with balance of Power theory include Morgenthau (1978), Waltz (1979, Kissinger (1979), and Mearsheimer (1994). The theory sees the international society as unequal, involving a relationship of power versus weakness. It posits therefore that basic inequality among states can be balanced and kept in check regarding each other's position to prevent hegemony. This by extension allows states to preserve their identity, integrity and independence and perhaps deter aggression or war. According to Morgenthau (1978), balance of power is not only inevitable but crucial mechanism for stabilizing international society. Similarly, Waltz (1979) identifies two forms of power balancing. First, internal balancing where a state uses internal efforts such as moving to increase economic capability, developing clever strategies and increasing military strength; and second, external balancing which occurs when states take external measures to increase their security by forming alliances.

Essentially, the five basic assumptions of balance of power theory are that:

1. States are determined to protect their vital rights and interests by all means,

including war.

2. Vital interests of the states are threatened.
3. The relative power position of states can be measured with a degree of accuracy.
4. Balance of Power assumes that “balance” will either deter the threatening state from launching an attack or permit the victim to avoid defeat if an attack should occur.
5. The statesmen can, and they do make foreign policy decisions on basis of power considerations.

Having X-rayed the theory, it is thus imperative to state that the applicability of balance of power theory is much germane for coherent analysis and understanding of the dynamics of the North Korea – US nuclear imbroglio. Undoubtedly the current level of nuclear armament by North Korea following six successful atomic nuclear tests including hydrogen bombs has significantly shaped a strategic balance of power in North East Asia. From a military perspective, North Korea seeks to achieve a power balance either as a nuclear deterrence against a potential conventional force attack or nuclear attack (Second strike capability) or first strike capability against adversaries. Threats from the United States and memories of US invasion of Iraq and Libya combined to bolster Kim Jong Un’s resolve to advance North Korea’s military capability to redesign the security architecture in North East Asia and represent a clear deterrence to US invasion.

Up to now, the focus on North Korea has been on rolling back Pyongyang’s nuclear programme but it may be more realistic to seek to contain it. Most experts believe the opportunity to prevent North Korea from developing power balance and deterrence has come and gone as the country now has the bombs as well as ICBMs that could hit the United States mainland (Leans, 2017 cited in Mosher, 2018). More so, Russia and China, North Korea’s closest powerful allies have leveraged on North Korea’s nuclear advancement to contain American military presence in North East Asia as both Moscow and Beijing warn of the grave consequence of any military action on North Korea.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research method and sourced its data from secondary sources. We used time series research design and employed trend analytical technique for data analysis. The choice of this method was basically due to the fact that this study has enough data in qualitative form and they were accessible and available for use. Investigation was carried out to unravel the factors that reinforce North Korea’s nuclear armament programme. We focused on why United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions have failed to dissuade North Korea from nuclear weapons proliferation and interrogated the implications of this failure on North East Asian regional peace and security and by extension the international community.

Factors Reinforcing North Korea's Nuclear Armament Programme Regime Survival and Deterrence

Analysts and experts have argued that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un does not necessarily want nuclear bombs and missile just to launch them on United State or any country; instead, it is meant to deter potential aggressors. More so, North Korea under Kim Jong-Un is determined to protect and preserve her sovereignty through credible nuclear deterrence. In the words of a nuclear policy expert at the Middlebury Institution of International Studies at Monterrey, Jeffrey Lewis cited in Mosher (2008:2)

If I were Kim Jong-un, I would want nuclear weapons too... How do you assure the North Koreans when they sign a deal, that they don't end up like Saddam? Kim Jon-un I think is fearful of ending up like Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi. He is terrified that we (US) will do him what we did to them and has decided that nuclear weapons are the best way to ward that off.

The experience of the Iraqi leader- Saddam Hussein who was falsely accused of stock piling weapons of mass destruction (WMD) leading to US invasion of Iraq in march 2003 during which Saddam was toppled actually bolsters North Korea's desire not to give up its nukes. In the same vein, Muammer Gaddafi of Libya was convinced to make a deal with the United States, abandon its nascent nuclear programme and reaffirm the country's commitment to the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty only to be killed in 2011 following American forces invasion of his country (Carpenter,2017). These stark memories inform why Kim sees nuclear bomb and ballistic missiles as a regime survival tool and deterrent antidote.

i. Bargaining Strategy to Secure a Negotiation Table

Pyongyang also craves to use its nuclear capability to force Washington and its allies into pushing for a negotiation table where North Korea could present its own demands. Ryall (2017) noted that one of such demands is ensuring that the United States signs a treaty never to attack the regime and at the same time recognize the country as a nuclear power.

But on the contrary, the Trump administration stance is on a denuclearized North Korea. However, with no official diplomatic relations between North Korea and the United States, the former has resorted to reaching out indirectly to understand Trump's position through holding meetings with former US diplomats and think-tankers in neutral places such as Geneva and Kuala Lumpur. In one of such meetings held in September, 2016, in Switzerland, the North Koreans completely rejected and ruled out the idea of "freeze-for-freeze" in which Pyongyang would freeze its nuclear and missile activities if the United States stopped conducting military exercises in South Korea. The US, South Korea and Japan also ruled out the above stated idea being promoted by Russia and China (Fiefied, 2017; Vitskovskaya, 2017).

ii. US-South Korea Massive Joint Military Drills

The United States has overtly contributed to recurrent nuclear war tension in the Korean peninsula through its annual massive joint military exercises with South Korea. The annual joint Foal Eagle war Eagle war games for instance entails large scale drills of land, sea and air forces span through months. North Korea sees the military drills as direct rehearsals for war against it and this has always raised tensions in the Korean peninsula. The 2016 exercise involves 300,000 South Korean troops and around 17,000 American military personnel backed by warships and warplanes (Vitkovskaya,2017). Most recently, the 2017 annual US-South Korea massive joint military drills featured the United States Navy sending the air craft carrier the USS Carl Vinson, and its strike group of two guided destroyers and a guided missile cruiser. The US Marine Corps dispatched sophisticated F-35B stealth fighters from Japan to the Korean Peninsula for the first time. Reports also indicate that nuclear capable strategic bombers such as B-52s and B-1Bs, were billed to be sent from Guam (Symonds, 2017). This massive show of force amid an already tense stand – off over North Korea’s nuclear and missile testing presents a catalyst for potential nuclear war. The exercise had been routinely described by US and South Korean officials previously as defensive but North Korea views this as offensive.

iii. Goal of Achieving Korean Unification

Following the 1950 – 1953 Korean war which ended with an armistice and not a peace treaty, North Korea remains technically at war with South Korea. North Korean propaganda is a regular emphasis that the ultimate aim of the Kim dynasty is to win the Korean War started by Kim Jong-un’s grandfather Kim Il-Sung in 1950 aimed at unifying North and South Koreans.

iv. Quest for International Recognition and influence on Regional Security Architecture

Despite North Korea’s primary ambition of ensuring regime survival, the deployment of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles with at least a proven degree of capability goes a long way to buttress the point that the country wants to be recognized as a nuclear power peer. Achieving this, they believe would reshape the regional security architecture in North East Asia, ensure lifting of sanction regime and diminish US military hegemony in the region (Ryall,2017).

Table 1: Timeline of North Korea’s Nuclear Tests

S/N	Date	Nuclear Tests description	Estimated Yield	Magnitude
1	October 9, 2016	North Korea successfully carried out its first nuclear atomic test in an underground explosion	0.5 – 2 Kilotons (kt)	4.1mb

2	May 25, 2009	An underground atomic explosion which is reported to be as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb was carried out by North Korea	2 – 4 Kilotons (kt)	4.52mb
3	February 12, 2013	A miniaturized lighter nuclear device with greater explosive force than previous tests was carried out by North Korea	6 – 9 Kilotons (kt)	4.9mb
4	January 6, 2016	North Korea carried out its first underground test of a hydrogen bomb signalling the country's huge leap forward in its nuclear capabilities	7 – 10 Kilotons (kt)	4.85mb
5	September 9, 2016	North Korea carried out a successful test of a nuclear warhead that can be mounted on a strategic range ballistic missile.	10 Kilotons (kt)	5.1mb
6	September 13, 2017	North Korea carried out its ever largest hydrogen bomb test causing an earthquake felt as far away as Vladivostok, Russia; a test carried out to check power control technology and a new design for producing H – bomb to be placed as the payload of the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)	140 Kilotons (kt)	6.1mb

Sources:1. Centre for Strategic and International Studies (2017); 2. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO, 2017) 3. Republic of Korea (ROK) Ministry of Defence (2017)

Table2: List of UN Security Council Resolutions and Sanctions Related to North Korea's Nuclear Proliferation

Date	Resolution	Content
11 May, 1993	S/RES/825	Urged North Korea to reconsider its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and oblige by its international obligations.
15 July, 2006	S/RES/1695	Condemned North Korea's 2006 launch of ballistic missiles and imposed sanction.
14 October, 2006	S/RES/1718	Expressed concern over North Korea's 2006 nuclear test, imposed sanctions and set up the sanctions committee on North Korea.
12 June, 2009	S/RES/1874	Expressed concern over North Korea's 2009

		nuclear test. Extended sanctions to concern all arms material and related financial transaction, technical training, advice, services or assistance, management and maintenance. Set up the panel of expert to assist the sanctions committee.
24 September, 2009	S/RES/1887	Called for implementing the UNSC resolution 1540 for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament
7 June, 2010	S/RES/1928	Extended the mandate of the panel of experts until 12 June, 2011.
10 June, 2011	S/RES/1985	Extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 12 June, 2012 and asked it to submit its mid-term and final report to the sanctions committee for discussion one month before they are submitted to the Security Council.
12 June, 2012	S/RES/2050	Extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 12 June, 2013.
22 January, 2013	S/RES/2087	Condemned North Korea's 2012 Satellite launch and added to sanctions
7 March, 2013	S/RES/2094	Imposed sanctions after North Korea's 2013 nuclear test
5 March, 2014	S/RES/2141	Extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 5 April, 2015
4 March 2015	S/RES/2207	Extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 5 April, 2016
2 March, 2016	S/RES/2270	Imposed sanction after North Korea 2016 nuclear and missile test. Sanctions include inspection of all passing cargo to and from North Korea, prohibition of all weapons trade with the country, restrictions of North Korean imports of luxury goods and expulsion of certain North Korean diplomats suspected of illicit activities
30 November, 2016	S/RES/2321	The UNSC unanimously sanctions regime against the DPRK in response to the country's 9 September nuclear test.
23 March, 2017	S/RES/2345	The UNSC extended the mandate of the panel of experts into 2018.
2 June, 2017	S/RES/2356	TheSUNSC unanimously sanctioned a list of individuals and entities designated as being engaged in or providing support for Pyongyang's nuclear related programme
5 August, 2017	S/RES/2371	The UNSC unanimously strengthened its sanctions regime against North Korea in response to that

		country's 28 July, 2017 missile test.
11 September, 2017	S/RES/2375	The UNSC unanimously strengthened its oil sanctions regime against North Korea in response to that country's sixth nuclear test, limits exports of refined petroleum products to North Korea from 4 to 2 million barrels annually, bans overseas sales of North Korea textiles and further restricts the country's export of its workers.
22 December, 2017	S/RES/2397	The UNSC unanimously strengthened its sanctions in response to the launch of Hwasong- 15 intercontinental ballistic missile

Source:http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/list-of-United-Nations-Security-Council-resolution_concerning-North-Korea

Implications of North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Proliferation on Regional and Global Security

In a number of ways, North Korea's incessant tests of nuclear weapons and launch of ballistic missiles have come to assume regional and global threat to peace and security as follows:

i. Re-awakening of Nuclear Arms Race in North East Asia

The belligerent attitude of North Korea towards its closest neighbours particularly South Korea and Japan has rendered the North East Asian region volatile, resulting to new concern over the security of states within the region. In a series of demonstration of nuclear power and military threats, North Korea has shown Japan and South Korea some degree of military intimidations and that it is capable of inflicting fatal injury on either of the two in the event of war. In August 2016, a North Korean Rodong missile flew 1000km and landed about 250 kilometres west of Japan's Oga peninsula inside Japan's exclusive economic zone. In 2010, North Korea bombarded the Yeonpyong Island killing scores of South Korean civilians. In February, 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe warned North Korea not to launch a rocket over his country's air space and threatened to shoot it down if they did. However, Kim Jong-un proceeded to order the rocket launch on February 7, 2016 without a retaliatory action (Kim and Park, 2016; Melvin and Sciutto, 2016). In a similar manner, on March 6, 2017, four ballistic missiles were launched by North Korea and three of them fell into Japan's exclusive economic zone after flying some 1000km. Essentially, the February, 2016 launch of long range rocket prompted South Korea to begin discussing with the United States on the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense System (BBC, 2017).

ii. Transfer of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) to Terrorists and Rogue States

It has been reported by the UN Sanctions Committee that North Korea operates

an international smuggling network for nuclear and ballistic missile technology and specifically listed Syria and Iran as expert partners. Similarly, Pakistan, Egypt, Vietnam, Yemen and Libya are listed among nations within the international smuggling network for nuclear and ballistic missile technology. Nuclear weapon experts and analysts have warned that given the warm relations between Syria and Hezbollah and Hamas terrorist organizations on one hand and Syria and North Korea on the other hand, there is high tendency that nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles could slip into the hands of terrorists (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016).

iii. **Risk of Nuclear World War III**

It is generally thought that military action against North Korea can trigger a massive nuclear war capable of dragging United States, South Korea, Japan, NATO into nuclear war with North Korea, Russia and China. Scholars such as Lewis (2016), Kelly (2017) and Benneth (2017) have maintained that attacking North Korea now that they have acquired nuclear weapons is not going to prevent war but a move that will trigger plain nuclear war. It is argued that unconditional dialogue is one of the few remaining options that should be tested. Marcus (2017) also averred that China's support for the regime in Pyongyang is anchored on the fear that a complete collapse of the North Korea regime could lead to a US sponsored internal insurrection that will unify the Korean Peninsula in an atmosphere of heavy US military presence at its borders. Leaving aside its strategic nuclear arsenal, North Korea could devastate Seoul, the Capital of South Korea with massive military artillery fire and rockets. Russian President, Vladimir Putin has also stated that putting pressure on Pyongyang to hands off its nuclear weapon is "a dead end road" and called for talks to resolve the issue (CNN, 2017).

Findings

The study made the following findings:

1. Sanctions regime has failed to prevent North Korea from becoming a nuclear power state as the country has presently acquired both atomic and hydrogen bombs and successfully tested international ballistic missiles.
2. China's tacit support of the North Korean regime is informed by regional security concerns. Essentially, China sees North Korea as a formidable buffer against the United States.
3. A pre-emptive military strike on North Korea by the United States and its allies has the potency of triggering catastrophic nuclear war in the Korean Peninsula capable of dragging several nations into third world war.
4. It is no longer feasible to pressure North Korea handing off its nuclear weapons as the regime sees it as a veritable tool for survival, security and deterrence.
5. Frequent massive joint military drills by United States and South Korean forces constitute one of the major catalysts for the endemic nuclear tension in the Korea Peninsula.

6. Any nuclear threats against South Korea or missile launch into Japan's exclusive economic zone could trigger a new nuclear arms race in North East Asia.

Recommendations

The study recommends thus:

1. The idea of military action should be ruled out against North Korea as this will result to massive military and civilian casualties and by extension trigger multifaceted international nuclear warfare.
2. Extreme severe economic sanctions targeting North Korean regime's offshore hard currency and income as well as its collaborators should be unanimously enforced by all members of the United Nations Security Council including Russia and China. This will significantly deny Kim the means to pay his military and workers. This will discourage Kim to abandon further nuclear proliferation.
3. It is imperative to re-start the comatose six –Party Talks involving North Korea, South Korea, US, Russia, China and Japan in order to establish a negotiation table where demands, compromises, and agreement can be secured.
4. The Freeze – for – Freeze formula whereby North Korea should agree to submit its nuclear weapons to the UN Security Council and the United States completely stop all forms of joint military exercise with South Korea remains the best option to end nuclear tension in the Korea Peninsula.
5. Another peaceful option to solving the North Korea's nightmare is that the international community especially US and its allies can accept North Korea as a nuclear peer, integrate the regime into mainstream international affairs and assist it in economic development while it abandons further nuclear tests.

Conclusion

The study has established among other things that sanctions, UN Security Council Resolutions as well as threats from past and present United States leaders have failed to prevent North Korea from achieving its nuclear power ambition. Perhaps, the reality is that it is time the world can learn to live with a nuclear North Korea. There is still a role for the international community to quietly promote changes which can make North Korea less bellicose. Such role can centre on supporting Kim Jong-Un's regime drift towards the developmental dictatorship model. In so doing, all catalysts of war would have been diffused off to save humanity from another nuclear holocaust that would be more devastating than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki episode.

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