

Committee: Security Council

Issue: The question of nuclear weapons in the DPRK

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INTRODUCTION

The question of nuclear disarmament has been a major topic of debate ever since nuclear weapons were first used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II, with each attack bearing catastrophic consequences. After these incidents, the destructive power of nuclear weapons undeniably became the most dangerous of all other modern weaponry, due to their small size, big yield and dual-use capabilities. The international community feared possible future nuclear attacks and this fear led the two superpowers of the time, the USA and the USSR, to accumulate nuclear weapons during the Cold War, with both countries threatening to use their nuclear stockpile in numerous conflicts of the time. The two countries were also eager to provide their blocs with nuclear technology, thereby granting access to numerous other states to nuclear weapons.

However, it became clear that the solution to nuclear proliferation was not further proliferation, but, instead, disarmament. The UN established the Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1), treaties on non-proliferation and agreements between the USA and the USSR were signed, all with the aim of reducing the amount of nuclear weaponry, and by that the risk of a nuclear war erupting, in the world.

To this day, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been one of the most important goals of the UN, but some states stand firmly in support of possessing nuclear weapons. A key country of interest in the past decades has been the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which, as the country itself has stated and experts have confirmed numerous times, has been interested in manufacturing and developing nuclear weapons as a means of self-defense. The existence of these weapons, however, constitutes a possible threat to global security, since their misuse could lead to thousands or maybe millions of lost lives. And so the question remains: What should be done regarding the nuclear weapons programme of the DPRK?

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Nuclear weapons¹

Nuclear weapons are, in general, weapons of mass destruction, which release vast amounts of nuclear energy deriving from nuclear reactions. They were first and only used in the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the USA, although the USSR also confirmed having a vast stockpile at the time. The amount of nuclear weapons increased globally during the Cold War, but reduced itself again after the 1990s. Nowadays the only five officially recognized nuclear-weapon states (meaning that they have the right to own nuclear weapons but not to use them) under the NPT are the P5. Nonetheless many more states have admitted to producing nuclear weaponry in the past, e.g. South Africa, with India, Pakistan and the DPRK still having nuclear weapons.

There are generally two types of nuclear weapons: the ones that use only fission or the ones with a combination of fission and fusion. Fission weapons, or otherwise known as atomic bombs, generally use plutonium or uranium and are the weaker out of the two. Fusion weapons, however, or hydrogen bombs, produce much bigger yields, because they combine the technology of the former weapon with fusion fuel to enhance it. Due to this combination, hydrogen bombs are more difficult to design effectively.

Nuclear disarmament/Denuclearization²

Removing and/or prohibiting the use of nuclear arms in an area/country/zone etc. Denuclearization has been established as one of the key goals of the of the UN ever since it was established. In fact, the first ever resolution of the committee had atomic energy as its topic. The UN, along with numerous other international organizations, has stated that denuclearization and non-proliferation is critical in order for all countries to be able to coexist, which is the reason why it has encouraged all states to abandon nuclear weapons and condemned their use.

A key treaty on the issue of denuclearization is the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which allows for the P5 to own nuclear weapons technology, but not to provide it to or attack another member state. This creates a sense of responsibility for the P5 and one of safety for smaller states, which are protected from any attacks by the treaty.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/nuclear-weapon> & <https://www.ctbto.org/nuclear-testing/types-of-nuclear-weapons/>

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/denuclearize>

Sanctions³

The sanctions this study guide refers to are all United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions, and thereby fall under the following definition:

“The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In order to fully understand the situation as it stands, it is important to take into consideration the factors and events that have influenced the DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme throughout the years.

Early stages: 1950s – 1970s

After Soviet occupation in North Korea and the Korean War (1950-1953) had ended, a strong alliance had been built between the newly-formed state of the DPRK and the USSR. Through a series of cooperative agreements between the two, North Korea started receiving information, expertise and training regarding the development of nuclear technology as well as constructing the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center. The initiation of the programme distressed numerous countries in the global community, since its level of security and the avoidance of accidents could not be verified by anyone.



Figure 1: The Yongbyon nuclear research facility

Progress was made regarding the safety of the programme when a significant part of the research facilities were brought under the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) safeguards in 1977.

³ <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vii/>

Denuclearization progress: 1970s-2000

Throughout this time period the North Korean government viewed both the presence of American troops in South Korea and the existence of American nuclear weapons as an immediate threat. With the goal of ultimately minimizing the danger of a nuclear attack, as the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA, North Korea's official state media) stated in 2003, the DPRK acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon state in 1985. This meant that nuclear-weapon member states, such as the USA, were forbidden from attacking other member states, like the DPRK. Further progress in the nuclear disarmament of the DPRK was made with the Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992, under which the two Koreas agreed "not [to] test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons"⁴, although no Nuclear Control Commission was agreed on for the declaration. The DPRK also signed an IAEA safeguards agreement in 1992, which called for a declaration of all of the nuclear activity of the DPRK and for inspections on the said activities. It was noted that the declaration the DPRK provided did not include all of the DPRK's nuclear stockpile, specifically its plutonium arsenal, and, once the IAEA requested access to two additional sites, the DPRK forbid it and declared in 1993 its intention to withdraw from the NPT. After a series of talks between the USA and the DPRK and an assurance by the former that there would be no threat and use of force on their behalf, the DPRK suspended its decision. In 1994 the DPRK and the USA signed the "Agreed Framework", under which the DPRK would "replace [it's] graphite-moderated reactors and related facilities with light-water reactor (LWR) power plants"⁵ with the aid and funding of the USA. It should be noted that neither of the two countries was completely satisfied with the progress of the agreement, with the DPRK calling for a faster construction of the LWRs and with the USA fearing non-compliance on behalf of the DPRK.

The Six-Party Talks and the 1st Nuclear Test: 2001-2008

Under the Bush administration, the USA went through a review of their policy towards the DPRK, with President Bush himself calling them a member of the "Axis of Evil"⁶. The two

⁴ Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. February 19, 1992. <<http://www.nti.org/media/pdfs/aptkoreanuc.pdf>>

⁵ Agreed Framework of 1994 between the USA and the DPRK, October 21, 1994. <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/1994/infcirc457.pdf>

⁶ "Axis of Evil". The President's State of the Union Address. January 29, 2002. <<http://www.enotes.com/topics/axis-evil-terrorism-essential-primary-sources>>

countries repeatedly accused each other of not fulfilling their responsibilities under the Agreed Framework, which had practically collapsed by the end of 2002. On the 10th of January of 2003 the DPRK expelled all IAEA inspectors from the country and announced its withdrawal from the NPT, to which the Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that he “regrets the announcement ... and strongly urges reconsideration”⁷. In August of the same year the DPRK, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the USA met in Beijing to discuss the denuclearization of the DPRK. These talks, which were named the Six-Party Talks, have served as the main platform for discussion on the nuclear weapons of the DPRK and took place a total of 6 times from 2003 until 2007.

From the 13th until the 19th of September of 2005, a few months after the DPRK stated that they had produced nuclear weaponry, the Six-Party countries agreed on a Statement of Principles, under which the DPRK would abandon the nuclear weapons it had manufactured, allow IAEA safeguards to be applied, return to the NPT and receive a LWR from the USA. However, the USA froze a number of assets of the commercial bank Banco Delta Asia, which was closely tied to North Korea, thereby hindering economic transactions to and from the country and leading the DPRK to refuse the application of the Statement of Principles before the freeze was lifted. Tensions increased further with the DPRK’s first nuclear test on October 9th 2006, which the KCNA officially announced and which produced a small yield of less than 1 kiloton. The Security Council condemned the test a few days later through Resolution 1718⁸,

which imposed a number of sanctions on North Korea, mostly meant to limit the country’s access to nuclear technology. In 2007 the process of denuclearizing the DPRK gained speed, since an Action Plan and a Second Action Plan regarding the Statement of Principles of 2005 were agreed upon by the DPRK, the freeze on Banco Delta Asia was lifted and the DPRK shut down its facilities in Yongbyon.



Figure 2: The cooling tower of the 5MW(e) reactor in Yongbyon is demolished on June 27th, 2008.

⁷ <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=225>

⁸ S/RES/1718: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/572/07/PDF/N0657207.pdf?OpenElement>

Further Nuclear Tests: 2009-2016

Due to controversy regarding the DPRK's rocket programme, the country expelled IAEA and US inspectors in 2009 and rebuilt the facilities it had previously demolished. On May 25th 2009 the second nuclear test took place, this time producing a bigger yield of 4 kilotons,



Figure 3: A map of previous North Korean nuclear tests

as detected by South Korean and American sources. The Security Council reacted by adopting resolution 1874⁹, which imposed further sanctions on the country and set up a Sanctions Committee, while the DPRK refused to return to the Six-Party Talks. The relations between North Korea and the international community were stressed further in 2010 due to military conflicts between North and South Korea and due to the North's statement on the construction of

a LWR, which would grant them access to higher and possibly more dangerous nuclear compounds. Although the DPRK agreed to suspend their nuclear programme when they were promised food aid by the USA in 2012, the agreement was cancelled due to the DPRK putting a satellite into orbit, which was considered a violation of resolutions 1718 and 1874. A few months later, on the 12th of February of 2013, the DPRK carried out its third nuclear test, which caused an earthquake with a magnitude of 5,1 on the Richter scale and produced a yield of 6-9 kilotons, as detected by China. Resolution 2094¹⁰ imposed even heavier sanctions, but remained true to the Security Council's statement that there would be no use or threat of force. Three years later, on January 6th 2016, the DPRK conducted their fourth nuclear test, which the KCNA claimed was a hydrogen bomb, one of the most dangerous nuclear weapons. The magnitude of the earthquake of the underground detonation was, however, 5,1 Richter, similar to the test of 2013, leading to experts doubting the characterization of the bomb as a hydrogen bomb. Even heavier sanctions were imposed through Resolution 2270¹¹ on activities related to the arms and nuclear weapons programmes of the DPRK, which were characterized

⁹ S/RES/1874: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/368/49/PDF/N0936849.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁰ S/RES/2094: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2094\(2013\)&referer=/english/&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2094(2013)&referer=/english/&Lang=E)

¹¹ S/RES/2270: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2270.pdf

as “quite harsh” but necessary in order for progress to be made in initiating dialogue with the DPRK. Some of these measures were the expulsion of DPRK diplomats suspected of supporting the nuclear programme, as well as the imposition of sanctions on all arms and on anything related to nuclear technology, except from food and medicine. On September 9th 2016, DPRK conducted its fifth, largest and most recent nuclear test, resulting into a 5 magnitude earthquake and an explosive yield of 10 kilotons, reflecting significant improvement in DPRK’S capacity to build a functional nuclear warhead. In early October 2016, the 28 North Group, run by JH University’s School of Advanced International Studies, reported high activity around North Korea’s nuclear test site, adding to the global unease with DPRK’s increased ability for and frequency of nuclear tests.

Alleged amount of nuclear weaponry and the international threat it imposes

The exact size of the DPRK’s current nuclear arsenal remains unknown, experts, however, have tried to estimate the capability of the DPRK in producing such weapons. The main indicators in these attempts have been the reports that North Korea disclosed in accordance with its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, the Agreed Framework, the Action Plans and the Six-Party Talks, along with statements made by the North Korean government. The biggest part of the nuclear research facilities can be found in Yongbyon. Although a large part of the armory was dismantled because of the various disarmament agreements of the DPRK, a rough estimate can be made through the nuclear reactors and reprocessing facilities in the area.

The first one is the 5MW(e) reactor, which was first used in 1986, in order to produce electricity, although it is also capable of producing weapon-grade plutonium. The fear of the use of this reactor for military purposes led to it remaining shut-down from 1994 until 2003, in accordance with the Agreed Framework of 1994, and from 2007 until 2008, when its cooling tower was ultimately demolished in accordance with the Six-Party Talks. Satellite imagery shows that the reactor was restarted and operating in 2013, while the North Korean government stated that the reactor would be used in plutonium production.

Another important reactor is the experimental 25-30MW(e) LWR, whose construction started in 2010 and still continues. Information on the construction of LWRs was given to the DPRK by the USA through the Agreed Framework, but the promised LWRs were never finished. The DPRK therefore began construction on its own, which raised concern among experts regarding the reactor’s operation and its accordance with international safeguards. Once it is finished, it will provide the DPRK with electricity, which it

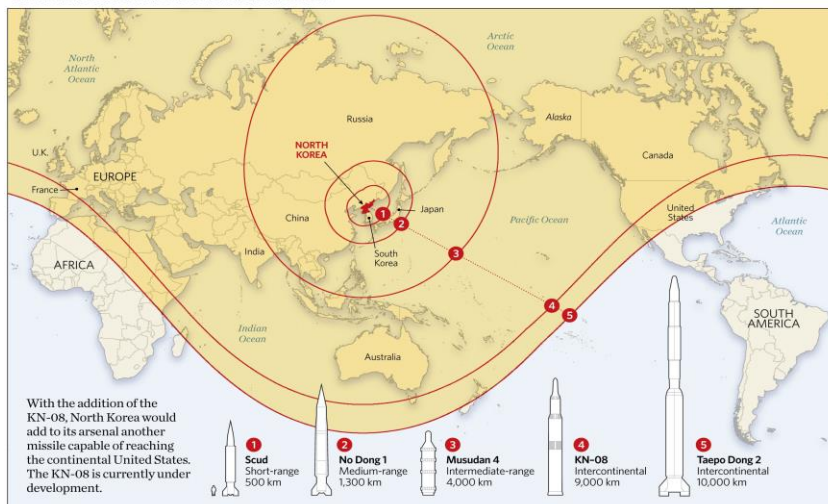
is currently lacking, according to the North Korean government. The LWR could, however, also be used in the production of plutonium for nuclear devices.

In total, if one takes into consideration the amount of plutonium produced by these reactors and the highly enriched uranium the country processes in Yongbyon, the country could have “anywhere from 20 to 100 nuclear weapons by 2020”, as stated by the National Committee on North Korea in January 2016. While the yields of the nuclear tests have not been as large as the one in, for example, Hiroshima, it should be noted that the DPRK has progressively achieved better results in its tests, starting with less than one kiloton and reaching at least six in 2016.

Estimating the destructive power of the nuclear weapons of the DPRK does not only depend on the force of the weapons themselves, but also on that of the delivery mechanism. Although the international community does not possess a complete report of the DPRK’s ballistic arsenal, the fact that they managed to launch a satellite into orbit in

2012 and 2016 indicates that they possess both short- and long-range missile technology. The following image shows the range of the known DPRK ballistic systems, which mostly covers Asia, Europe, North America and the Pacific Ocean.

The Reach of North Korea's Ballistic Missiles



Sources: Missilethreat.com, "Ballistic Missiles," and Reuters, "North Korea Missiles Could Reach US, Says South," NBC News, December 23, 2012, and John Schilling, "Where's That North Korean ICBM Everyone Was Talking About?" 38 North, March 12, 2015, <http://38north.org/2015/03/jschilling031215/> (accessed August 24, 2015). heritage.org

Figure 4: The DPRK’s ballistic capabilities

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Since this topic revolves around the nuclear weapons programme of the DPRK, the country’s government plays an important role in how the denuclearization efforts will be adopted. While it can be noted that the DPRK emphasizes their right to self-defense as a reason to run this programme, the country has also been open to negotiations on the issue,

for example during the Six-Party Talks, when they received food aid and LWR technology in exchange for agreeing on denuclearization.

United States of America

The USA has played a major role in the question of the nuclear programme of the DPRK, which can easily be recognized by the numerous agreements the two countries have signed on the issue, such as the Agreed Framework of 1994 and the Six-Party Talks Action Plans. The DPRK has also often requested bilateral talks with the USA as a precondition to enter negotiations such as the Six-Party Talks. Altogether, the USA aims towards the denuclearization of the DPRK, since their weapons could pose an international threat if they were misused, employing different policy responses ranging from bilateral talks to strategic military alliances with neighbors and UNSC imposed sanctions.

People's Republic of China

China and the DPRK have been allies ever since the Korean War, when Chinese troops supported the North, but their relationship has been strained by the nuclear tests of the DPRK. China, along with Japan and South Korea, namely find themselves in the attack range of the ballistic weapons of the DPRK and would be in danger, if an attack were to happen. Additionally, the PRC was previously accused of using its veto power in the Security Council to protect the DPRK from measures that would undermine the Kim regime's policy, but this phenomenon has not appeared in resolutions 1718, 1874, 2094 and 2270. However, the country still shows interest in the DPRK's development and humanitarian conditions, stating on numerous occasions that North Korea's sovereignty should be respected and that humanitarian and food aid should not be affected by the nuclear weapons tests.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA was the first international organization to be involved in the case of the DPRK's nuclear weapons, since North Korea placed its nuclear programme under IAEA safeguards in 1977. Ever since then, the Agency has been the one to oversee the implementation of its safeguards in the DPRK's nuclear facilities through inspections, declarations and monitoring of the implementation of agreements, for example of the freeze on the graphite-reactors of the Agreed Framework of 1994. However, the DPRK's withdrawal from the NPT in 2003 placed it out of IAEA safeguards, leading the international community to further worry about the safety of the programme, especially after all IAEA inspectors were expelled from the country in 2009. The Security Council has repeatedly urged North Korea to

welcome IAEA inspectors back to the country, in order for them to inspect the construction of the LWR in Yongbyon, but the country still maintains a negative stance against the Agency.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
12 th December 1985	The DPRK accedes to the NPT
30 th January 1992	The DPRK signs an IAEA safeguards agreement
19 th February 1992	Joint Declaration of North and South Korea On the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula
12 th March 1993	The DPRK intends to withdraw from the NPT
21 st October 1994	USA-DPRK Agreed Framework
29 th February 2002	"Axis of Evil" Speech by US President George Bush
10 th January 2003	The DPRK withdraws from the NPT
27 th August 2003	1st Round of Six-Party Talks
25 th February 2004	2nd Round of Six-Party Talks
23 rd June 2004	3rd Round of Six-Party Talks
15 th September 2005	Freeze of Banco Delta Asia funds
19 th September 2005	4th Round of Six-Party Talks and Statement of Principles
9 th October 2006	1st Nuclear Test of DPRK
14 th October 2006	UNSC Resolution 1718
13 th February 2007	5th Round of Six-Party Talks and Denuclearization Action Plan
September 2007	The freeze in Banco Delta Asia is lifted
27 th June 2008	Yongbyon 5MW(e) cooling tower is demolished
25 th May 2009	2nd Nuclear Test of the DPRK
12 th June 2009	UNSC Resolution 1874
12 th February 2013	3rd Nuclear Test of the DPRK
7 th March 2013	UNSC Resolution 2094
6 th January 2016	4th Nuclear Test of the DPRK
2 nd March 2016	UNSC Resolution 2270
9 th September 2016	5th Nuclear Test of the DPRK

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): The NPT entered into force in 1970 and has the goal of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. The DPRK acceded to the NPT in 1985, but was the first state to withdraw from it in 2003. Since then the DPRK has been urged to reenter the treaty on multiple occasions.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1718 (14.10.2006): Condemned the first nuclear test of the DPRK and imposed the first sanctions on the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1874 (12.06.2009): Condemned the second nuclear test, imposed further sanctions on the import and export of

arms to and from the DPRK and called for the establishment of the Panel of Experts.

- United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2094 (07.03.2013): Condemned the third nuclear test, imposed further sanctions and enhanced the inspection of cargo to and from the DPRK.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2270 (02.03.2016): Condemned the fourth nuclear test and imposed further sanctions, especially financial sanctions.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

As members of the Security Council have stated numerous times before, diplomacy is the most common measure, which has been used regarding the nuclear programme of the DPRK, usually through agreements.

On one hand, there have been bilateral agreements, such as the Joint Declaration of 1992 and the Agreed Framework of 1994, along with numerous bilateral talks. In the majority of these agreements the DPRK has agreed to abandon their nuclear weapons programme in exchange for humanitarian or food aid, technology etc. Although they have been effective to some extent, these agreements tend to collapse quickly in case the aid is delayed, in which the DPRK declares that the agreement is void and it is not bound to it anymore.

On the other hand, there have also been multilateral agreements, for example through the Six-Party Talks, and the involvement of the UN. The Six-Party Talks are undoubtedly the most important platform for discussion on the nuclear programme of the DPRK. Not only does the DPRK open itself to dialogue with South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the USA, but the Talks have successfully produced the Joint Statement of Principles of 2005 and the two Action Plans of 2007, which aided in the denuclearization efforts. Lastly, the return of the DPRK to the Six-Party Talks is called upon by all Security Council resolutions on the DPRK and is generally

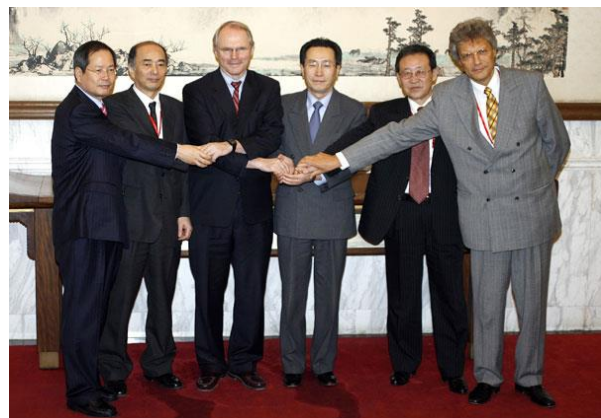


Figure 5: The delegations of the Six-Parties in December, 2006

recognized as one of the most effective measures in halting the production of nuclear weapons in the DPRK. Agreements such as the Six-Party Talks Documents tend to be more difficult to denounce, since more parties are involved in them, and the involvement of neutral states ensures more fair and, possibly, successful terms between the states. A problem, which has presented itself since 2007, however, is that politic quarrel between one or more of the members of the talks may lead to them not taking place. South Korea, for example, did not agree to restart the Six-Party Talks in 2012, after North Korea was involved in military attacks against it.

The Security Council has also tried to stop the DPRK from producing nuclear weapons by limiting its access to nuclear technology through sanctions in resolutions 1718, 1874, 2094 and 2270. Although it has been noted that the sanctions have slowed down the nuclear programme, they have not been able to completely stop the nuclear programme of the DPRK yet.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Diplomacy

It has been seen in the past that agreements and diplomatic dialogue with the DPRK have proven to temporarily halt their nuclear programme. The DPRK itself stated that a large part of the programme is meant to either supply North Korea with energy or ensure the safety of its citizens and the sovereignty of the states from global threats. If these problems were to be resolved through agreements, it would be easier for the DPRK to agree on abandoning their nuclear weapons. It is not certain, however, whether the DPRK would stay true to these agreements, as it has been seen numerous times in the past decades.

Sanctions

As it has already been stated, harsher and harsher sanctions have been imposed by the Security Council on the DPRK's access to nuclear technology. However, the country has still managed to conduct nuclear tests, meaning that the sanctions have not managed to completely halt the programme yet. More sanctions on the DPRK could further hinder the development of such weapons, but there are two main problems. First of all, it is very difficult to determine whether all countries abide by their responsibility to impose the sanctions and it is therefore possible that North Korea still receives knowledge, training, technology etc. that is blocked by the sanctions. Second of all, the sanctions could largely strain the Korean

economy, as well as incriminate and isolate North Korea in the eyes of the global community, thereby having a negative impact on the living standards of everyday Korean citizens.

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