

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Mitigating the Threat of North Korea's Advanced Missile Arsenal and Military Cooperation

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Introduction

The North Korean missile arsenal, as well as a variety of military cooperations with other countries, has undeniably become what is known as one of the most urgent issues in the 21st century. Concerns for the issue rose after North Korea withdrew itself from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003 and started conducting nuclear tests in 2006. Despite many past efforts to deter the expansion of North Korea's missile arsenal, they have been largely ineffective. North Korea's close military ties with powerful nations such as The People's Republic of China and The Russian Federation has further impeded efforts to de-escalate. Further development of North Korea's missile arsenal will accentuate tensions between North and South Korea and has the potential to cause a global scale conflict.

The Security Council are dedicated to maintaining international peace and security, making it a perfect candidate in addressing this issue. Member States have to consider the political implications and international consequences of the conflict to gain an holistic overview of the problem. Members states should also be reminded that past attempts to resolve the crisis, such as the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), were proven to be ineffective, indicating that new solutions to the problem are necessary in future attempts to de-escalate

Definition Of Key Terms

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The official name for North Korea, a state under the authoritarian leadership of the Kim dynasty, currently led by Kim Jong-un. Its political ideology is founded upon *Juche*, or self-reliance.

Advanced Missile Arsenal

The DPRK's diverse and evolving inventory of ballistic and cruise missiles, which extends beyond short-range Scud variants to include solid-fuel systems, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and hypersonic glide vehicles. "Advanced" denotes capabilities such as mobility, rapid launch, ability to evade defending missiles in flight, and the demonstrated or theoretical capacity to deliver a payload to intercontinental ranges (Acton, "Silver Bullet" 12-15).

Military Cooperation

In this context, military cooperation means the burgeoning exchange of military technology, arms, munitions, and tactical knowledge between the DPRK and other states, most notably the Russian Federation and The People's Republic of China. This cooperation is in clear violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions and represents a strategic alignment that alters regional and global security dynamics creating a complex political situation invalidating previous efforts at global disarmament.

Denuclearization

The process of complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of all nuclear weapons, weapons-usable materials, and delivery systems within DPRK. This has been the longest, though elusive, goal of international diplomatic efforts for decades. Efforts have been made in the DPRK however most of said efforts have been repealed by the DPRK and only recently have CVID and denuclearization efforts been completed successfully.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions

Legally binding decisions made by the UNSC under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Since 2006, a series of these resolutions have imposed sanctions on the DPRK with the aim of curtailing its prohibited weapons programs.

Six Party Talks

A series of multilateral negotiations held between 2003 and 2009 involving the DPRK, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. The objective was to find a peaceful resolution to the security concerns caused by DPRK's nuclear program.

Background

The root cause of the crisis lies in the division in the Korean Peninsula after it was split into two governing parties: North Korea and South Korea. a long-term conflict between the DPRK and the US-ROK alliance that has aggravated ever since the Korean War, as well as the DPRK's own perception that there is a risk of its existence becoming vulnerable.

The Korean War (1950-1953) didn't resolve in the form of a peace treaty; it ended in an armistice that cleaved the peninsula in half and left the two political parties in a technical state of war. The DPRK, a communist regime historically sanctioned and isolated from western powers, emphasized military strength and self-reliance were prioritized through the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The DPRK has expressed alarm toward the military superiority demonstrated by United States and South Korea, which further incentivized them to strengthen their military arsenal, especially their nuclear program (Lankov 112-115).

When the DPRK missile program was first developed, it was based on outdated Soviet-era Scud technology. But in recent decades, heavy emphasis on modernizing its missile technology allowed North Korea to develop an advanced arsenal. Notably, the DPRK launched the Taepodong-1 rocket over Japan in 1998, demonstrating the capabilities of the missile to reach adjacent regions. In the following decades after the incident, the DPRK was able to develop an inventory of intermediate-range (IRBMs) and even intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). In 2022 and 2023, the DPRK conducted an unprecedented increase in testing, launching dozens

of missiles, of which included its solid-fuel Hwasong-18 ICBM and a military reconnaissance satellite. (Davenport, "Nuclear Notebook"). Consequent of developing miniaturized warheads and survivable ICBMs, the DPRK now evolves from only being equipped with regional warheads to becoming a direct threat to the continental United States and its allies.

Recently, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has entered into a military partnership with the Russian Federation, potentially enhancing the combined military capabilities of both states. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has further influenced this relationship, as the DPRK has supplied artillery shells, rockets, and ballistic missiles to Russian forces in exchange for technological cooperation, economic assistance, and support for its satellite and advanced weapons development programs. The partnership with Russia contravenes existing UN sanctions and non-proliferation frameworks designed to limit such collaborations.

Major Parties and Organizations Involved

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The DPRK pinpoints regime survival as the main goal, with subsequent goals such as North Korea's recognition as a nuclear weapons state, lifting economic sanctions set upon it, and unification of the peninsula under its terms. Their state governed entities, the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the Munitions Industry Department, are dedicated to advance their military capabilities.

The United States of America (USA)

A permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the United States is a key ally to the Republic of Korea in its conflict with the DPRK. The US has consistently supported upholding economic sanctions and embargoes on North Korea to curb its nuclear development program.

The Republic of Korea

Since the Korean War, relations between North and South Korea have been tense. South Korea's policy also varies due to different administrators; the current government under

President Yoon Suk Yeol is more direct and aims to strengthen deterrence with the US and respond forcefully to provocations if there are any. However, this wasn't the case previously, because administrations tend to pursue sunshine policies (these are policies that intended to increase the engagement between the two neighboring nations in the hope that they would eventually resolve in peace). (Oberdorfer and Carlin 200-210).

The People's Republic of China (PRC)

China is the DPRK's one of the major allies and its largest trading partner. Because of China's powerful military strength and exports market, it offers extensive economic and political leverage. However, the interests of China has been complex due to multiple reasons. First it seeks stability near the border, so it would prefer a buffer state that is between itself and the US-aligned South Korea and doesn't want a regional arms race between DPRK and South Korea. However, they are also concerned that if they do not provide any form of support to the DPRK, there could be a regime collapse within DPRK, resulting in a refugee crisis or a unified Korea that allies with the US. (Shirk 155-160).

The Russian Federation

A strong political partner of the DPRK, Russia is responsible for giving the DPRK diplomatic cover at the UNSC, engaging in military trade, and supplying DPRK with technical expertise. Russia's is motivated because they believe that by supporting DPRK, they can more effectively challenge the US-led international order, gain more munitions for its wars, and create strategic distractions for Washington (Gabuev).

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The Security Council is the primary international body in charge of maintaining peace and security, passing eleven major sanctions resolutions since 2006 (1718, 1874, 2087, 2094, 2270, 2321, 2356, 2371, 2375, 2397, and 2499) so there is a comprehensive sanction regime. But because of recent divisions between the China-Russia bloc and the US, the council's ability to pass new resolutions or even to enforce current ones have been severely limited. (United Nations, "Security Council Resolutions").

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA no longer has any inspectors inside DPRK because they were expelled in 2009. Instead, the IAEA attempts to monitor the situation by analyzing open-source satellite images.

Timeline of Events

Year(s)	Event / Development
1980s– 1990s	DPRK begins Scud missile production and development of the Nodong missile. The 1994 Agreed Framework is signed with the US, freezing plutonium production, but it collapses in 2002.
2006	DPRK conducts its first nuclear test on October 9. The UNSC responds with Resolution 1718, imposing initial sanctions.
2009	DPRK conducts its second nuclear test. The Six-Party Talks collapse and have not reconvened.
2011	Kim Jong-un assumes power after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il.
2012	DPRK unveils a road-mobile ICBM, the Hwasong-13 (KN-08).
2016	DPRK conducts its fourth and fifth nuclear tests, claiming the fifth was a hydrogen bomb.
2017	A period of intense crisis. DPRK evaluates its first ICBMs, the Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15, and conducts its sixth and most powerful nuclear test. The UNSC responds with its toughest sanctions yet (Resolution 2397), targeting 90% of the DPRK's refined petroleum imports.
2018– 2019	A diplomatic thaw. Kim Jong-un meets with ROK President Moon Jae-in at the Panmunjom and Pyongyang Summits. The Singapore Summit with US President

	Donald Trump results in a vague denuclearization pledge but no concrete steps. A subsequent summit in Hanoi in 2019 collapses over sanctions relief.
2021	The DPRK announces a new five-year plan for weapons development, emphasizing tactical nuclear weapons and advanced delivery systems.
2022	A record year of missile testing, with over seventy launches. Tests include an IRBM over Japan and the first full-flight test of the Hwasong-17 ICBM.
2023	The DPRK launches its first military reconnaissance satellite, the Malligyong-1, and evaluates the solid-fuel Hwasong-18 ICBM, a significant advancement. It enshrines its nuclear policy in law, declaring it “irreversible.” During the parade conducted in honor of the 70th anniversary of the Korean War, the DPRK unveils a complete arsenal of nuclear-capable warheads with a multitude of ranges.
2023– Present	DPRK–Russia military cooperation intensifies. Kim Jong-un visits Russia, and the DPRK begins large-scale shipments of artillery and ballistic missiles to Russian forces. In return, it is suspected of receiving technical assistance for its satellite and missile programs.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The Six-Party Talks (2003-2009)

A multilateral effort conducted by South Korea, DPRK, China, Russia, Japan and the United States, the Six-Party Talks achieved its most significant success in 2005 with a Joint Statement where the DPRK committed to abandoning "all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs" in exchange for security guarantees and economic aid. However, implementation immediately faltered over verification disputes and the DPRK's continued provocative actions effectively nullifying all efforts made during the six party talks, which collapsed after DPRK's 2009 rocket launch and second nuclear test. Shortly after, the DPRK expelled all nuclear inspectors from the country. (Harrison 150-155).

Bilateral Summits (2018-2019)

The bilateral summits refer to the dual summits in Singapore and Hanoi which aimed to reach a denuclearization agreement between the US and the DPRK. While the Singapore Summit generated historic imagery, its joint statement lacked substance and a clear roadmap. The Hanoi Summit's failure revealed the fundamental gap between the parties: the US demanded complete denuclearization *before* significant sanctions relief, while the DPRK sought a step-by-step process with reciprocal concessions, including the lifting of key sanctions for the partial dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. The Bilateral Summits ended up ineffective due to this disagreement. (Cha 210-215).

Sanctions Regime

The UNSC sanctions regime on North Korea is the most comprehensive set of multilateral sanctions in modern history. It has included arms embargoes, bans on luxury goods, financial sanctions, asset freezes, travel bans, and caps on imports of oil and exports of coal, textiles, and seafood. Though initially effective, the DPRK has developed methods to circumvent sanctions, including ship-to-ship transfers of illicit goods, cybercrime, and the use of overseas laborers. Furthermore, the erosion of the regime due to non-enforcement by China and Russia has severely blunted its effectiveness in recent years. The sanctions regime has failed to denuclearize and has stopped humanitarian aid only worsening the already horrible humanitarian situation in DPRK. (Manyin and Smith).

Deterrence and Military Posture

The US-ROK alliance has maintained a robust deterrence posture, including the annual deployment of strategic assets like aircraft carriers and bombers, and large-scale joint military exercises. The US has also extended its nuclear protection system over the ROK and Japan. Under the Yoon administration, this has been reinforced through the **Washington Declaration**, establishing a new Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) to enhance strategic planning and the periodic visit of US nuclear-armed submarines to ROK ports (The White House).

Possible Solutions

Given the ineffective nature of past solutions to de-escalate the problem, a return to the old paradigms is unlikely to succeed. A new, more pragmatic, and multifaceted strategy is required, combining enhanced deterrence, rigorous sanctions enforcement, and creative diplomacy. Delegates could consider the following solutions when drafting their resolutions:

Solution 1: Full implementation and operationalize the US-ROK Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). This should go beyond symbolism to involve deep, integrated planning for nuclear deterrence scenarios, ensuring a seamless and coordinated response to any nuclear threat or use. This would allow for a more immediate response to DPRK's ever growing advanced missile arsenal and be a direct response to the DPRK and its military cooperations with China and Russia.

Solution 2: Enhance integrated air and missile defense systems between the US, ROK, and Japan. This includes real-time intelligence sharing, joint exercises for ballistic missile defense, and potential technological cooperation on systems like the Aegis Combat System and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD). This would further act towards creating strong cooperations between countries as a response to DPRK and its military cooperations. (Acton, "Rethinking" 8-10).

Solution 3: Publicly reinforce the US treaty commitments to its allies, making it unequivocally clear that any nuclear attack on the ROK or Japan will be met with an overwhelming and decisive response. This is to leave no room for doubt in Pyongyang regarding the credibility of extended deterrence. This would allow nearby countries as well as the United States to begin pushing back towards the DPRK.

Solution 4: The US, ROK, EU, and other partners could form an "DPRK Activities Monitoring Committee" focused on disrupting the DPRK's cyber operations and maritime smuggling. This involves sharing intelligence, imposing secondary sanctions on entities and individuals involved in these activities, and increasing maritime interdiction efforts. This would effectively cut off part of DPRK's operations for their arsenal and allows for further deterrence.

Solution 5: Publicly expose and sanction, through national mechanisms, entities in third countries that facilitate the DPRK-Russia arms trade. Naming and shaming, coupled with financial penalties, can increase the cost and complexity of this cooperation. Although this action may be deemed harsh by some it is necessary to enact this as it creates pressure politically to respond.

Solution 6: Pursue a "Freeze-for-Freeze" or "Action-for-Action" interim agreement as a starting point. This could involve a verifiable freeze on the DPRK's production of fissile material (plutonium and highly enriched uranium) and a moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile testing. In return, the international community could offer a partial suspension of specific sanctions, such as those on textiles or seafood, and the facilitation of humanitarian aid. This solution acts in favor of both parties since it is widely known that in DPRK the conditions for citizens are lesser compared to other places in the world allowing for both parties to benefit from this agreement.

Solution 7: Engage in sustained, working-level dialogue without preconditions, focusing on discrete, achievable goals rather than a grand bargain. Topics could include the return of POW/MIA remains, family reunions, or cooperation on public health issues, which can build a modicum of trust. This would greatly repeal the effects of previous solutions such as the sanction regime and allow humanitarian aid for the citizens of the DPRK leading to trust being built.

Solution 8: Initiate a multilateral dialogue, potentially involving China, Russia, the ROK, and the US, to discuss the formal conclusion of the Korean War. Replacing the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace treaty would address a core DPRK grievance and could create a more conducive environment for future disarmament talks.

Solution 9: Propose and maintain a clear and consistent offer to the DPRK and have it mediated by a neutral third party unrelated to the issue at hand: a path toward sanctions relief, economic development assistance, and security guarantees are available in exchange for concrete, verifiable steps toward disarmament. This message must be communicated consistently, regardless of political cycles in other capitals. This would create an ironclad communication addressing one of the main issues when it comes to disarmament and aid being that different political cycles can affect policies.

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