

North Korean Nuclear Weapon Programmes and Global Security Concerns

¹Ezeanya Emeka Vincent, Clark Victor Esekumemu² Orhero Abraham Ejogba³

¹Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

^{2,3}Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Corresponding author

Ezeanya Emeka Vincent

Phone: +2348030897865

Email: ev.ezeanya@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract:

The paper interrogated the persistent cases of nuclear weapon activities by the North Korean regime and how they have partly affected global security for decades. The paper is qualitative in orientation and explorative in typology; it solely relied on data gathered from secondary sources, particularly published journal articles, reports on global security as regards North Korea's nuclear weapon programmes, media publications and official reports. Data gathered through documented evidence (secondary sources) was content-analysed with the aid of logical reasoning, while Offensive Realism was employed as a theoretical guide /framework. Hinging on data presented and analyzed, the study established that North Korean nuclear weapon activities have continued to pose a series of threats to global security for years, with serious negative effects. The study recommended the need for the International Community to strengthen targeted sanctions against North Korean nuclear weapons activities while avoiding humanitarian impacts on North Korean citizens. In addition, the United Nations should strengthen its international monitoring mechanisms to prevent North Korea from exporting nuclear weapons to other countries or non-state actors.

Keywords: North Korea, Nuclear weapon, Global Security

Introduction

For decades, the menace of North Korea's nuclear weapons armament has acquired much relevance in the context of wider debate in the conduct of global peace and security. Observed in Dominguez (2015), the history of North Korea's nuclear weapons acquisition is traced to 1962 when the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea committed itself to what it called all-fortressization, which marked the beginning of the current hyper-militarized North Korea (Dominguez, 2015). Subsequently, the issue of North Korea's nuclear activities started gaining the attention of the International Community in 1992 when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discovered that its nuclear activities were more extensive than declared. This resulted in the withdrawal of North Korea from the IAEA in 1994. For this reason, the United States of America then led a negotiation with North Korea to have the Agreed Framework in a bid to stop North Korea's withdrawal from the IAEA. In exchange for energy assistance and light water reactors that would be supplied by the United States of America, North Korea was expected to halt its nuclear and ballistic weapons activities and grant access to IAEA inspectors (Fischer, 1997). However, both parties failed to meet the terms, which untimely led to a complete and total halt of the Agreed Framework in 2002 and North Korea's withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003. Up till the time of this study, no agreement on a method or timetable for dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons has been reached. North Korea, with the character of its leader, thus, continues to pose a major threat to global peace and security (Pompeo, 2018).

As the years progress, with the global security environment deteriorating, Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic weapons agenda remains a clear threat to global peace and security. The growing risk of superpower confrontations and, ultimately, the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons by any of them, makes it imperative that nuclear weapons be abolished (Ryan, 2014). According to President Kim, North Korea's nuclear weapons programme is meant to establish equilibrium with the United States of America forces (Alcaro, 2017).

The 8 June 2010 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, states parties reiterated the need to not just diminish the use of nuclear weapons but to minimize the potential of it being used as a response to security threats and also encourage the process of their total elimination (Ryan, 2014). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a small country located in Southeast Asia, has appeared brutal in the international media and the rest of the world. The International Community has set its sights on Korea, and the situation on the ground has been the subject of daily discussions in Washington, Moscow, Tokyo, Beijing and all over the world. Consequently, the North Korean nuclear activities have increasingly become a major concern for world security. On several attempts, Pyongyang has openly showcased its progress in both nuclear and ballistic missile technology to achieve a credible nuclear deterrence. The government has dedicated a huge amount of state resources to achieve this. This move has cast a dent on her relations with neighbouring countries and the major powers (Milani, 2018).

More recently, countries of the world, especially the West, have confronted North Korea over its nuclear weapons acquisition programme. While campaigning because efforts made in the past have had the same objectives: completely roll back North Korea's development of a functional nuclear weapons capability and stop a proliferation of nuclear weapons or devices to a third party, both capable of inducing a large-scale conflict on or outside the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's strategic nuclear weapons acquisition programme is an intricate and cumbersome issue with no simple way out. The then President Donald Trump's administration in the United States had employed some of the same options and strategy as his predecessors, such as bilateral talks, the use of threats and sanctions not just on Pyongyang but also on China, which it expected to use its influence on North Korea. However, North Korea has defied all these responses.

On February 12, 2013, tensions over the nuclear weapon programme of North Korea escalated sharply before gradually abating. North Korea conducted a third nuclear test explosion, through which it claimed to have certified a lighter and more compact nuclear warhead design. Its rejection of the United Nations Security Council's condemnation (Resolution 1695 of 15 July 2006, which condemned North Korea's 2006 launch of ballistic missiles and imposed sanctions against North Korea) of the test was followed by a series of provocative steps that raised the spectre of military conflict with the United States of America and South Korea (United Nations, 2014).

Subsequently, in late 2013, North Korea's leadership reaffirmed its intention to retain nuclear weapons for the indefinite future as a core element of its military-first policy and articulated a long-term strategy for expanding and improving the country's

nuclear forces. The year ended with little optimism about the prospects for restarting the stalled Six-Party Talks aimed at inducing North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for international assistance. The Six-Party Talks which had China, North Korea, United States of America, South Korea, Russia and Japan were hosted and chaired by China and became a series of multilateral talks that were held at intervals from 2003 to 2009 to dismantle North Korea's nuclear programme (Davenport, 2018a). The Talks resulted in a joint statement on denuclearization. After North Korea's nuclear activities became a concern, all United States of America's leaders from President George W. Bush through Donald Trump have used a combination of carrots and sticks to induce Pyongyang to stop and, now, roll back its nuclear weapons and long-range missile capabilities. The carrots are the diplomatic engagements; easing of sanctions, energy, humanitarian aid, economic relief and the possibility of a peace deal being signed. The sticks are the threat of ever-increasing diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions, and for the worst case, keeping open the option of militarily destroying its nuclear and missile capabilities (Rennack, 2006).

Moreover, in alliance with South Korea, the United States of America's policy towards North Korea has emphasized deterring conflict on the Peninsula, preventing Pyongyang from developing nuclear weapons and delivery systems. For its part, Pyongyang has sought the removal of the United States of America's forces from South Korea, as well as the lifting of the strict sanctions against her, the removal of her name from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, recognition as a nuclear state, and the conclusion of the peace treaty alongside the fulfillment of the food and energy assistance.

There have been strained relationships between and among the super power states such as Russia, China and America on the one hand, and the emerging nuclear power thirsty states such as Iran, Egypt, India on the other hand over North Korea leading to strategic and economic competition that is gradually enveloping the rest of the world (Mawdsley, 2019). As long as the North Korean regime continues to exist, arm itself and expressly, and develop its nuclear programmes, regardless of the consequences, the Cold War of Northeast Asia's history will not show any sign of ending too soon (Kaplan, 2016).

Since the Armistice Agreement of the Korean War in 1953, countries of Northeast Asia have shown commitment in supporting the Republic of South Korea economically and militarily as this is believed would be able to balance the Chinese influence in the Korean Peninsula. The United Nations in response to North Korea's provocations through the Security Council adopted nine major resolutions since 2006 that imposed and strengthened sanctions on North Korea for continuing to develop its nuclear weapons programme, demanded it-to refrain from ballistic missile tests and rejoin the nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which it gave its assent to in 1985 but pulled-out from in 2003 when it was alleged by the United States of America that the North Korea was in a quest to acquire illegal uranium for its nuclear weapons programme. They include Resolution 1718 of 2006, Resolution 1874 of 2009, Resolution 2087 of 2013, Resolution 2094 of 2013, Resolution 2270 of 2016, Resolution 2321 of 2016, Resolution 2371 of 2017, Resolution 2375 of 2017 and Resolution 2379 of 2017. All of these resolutions condemned North Korea's latest nuclear and ballistic weapons enrichment activities and further warned her to cease these illicit demonstrations that violate past United Nations Security Council resolutions

and also return to negotiations in the Six Party Talks (Davenport, 2018).

It has become irresistible to see North Korea's actions as a violation of the United Nations resolutions and international laws, and also a threat to regional and international peace and security. Yet, the efforts to keep under control North Korea's threat over the last decades and particularly after the ascension to power of Kim Jong-Un in December 2011 have been unsuccessful in preventing his regime from advancing its nuclear weapon programmes. There is, therefore, a global concern about the growing nuclear capability of North Korea on international security against the background of a growing momentum on the part of the Korean leader to unleash a nuclear holocaust on human population. This very concern constitutes a worrisome situation that motivated the researcher to examine the implications of North Korea's continued and deliberate nuclear weapon programmes on the current global security.

Conceptual Clarifications

Nuclear Weapons

Observed in Nabhani (2021), a nuclear weapon is considered an explosive device that derives its destructive force from nuclear reactions, either fission or a combination of fission and fusion. Both chemical and nuclear reactions release vast quantities of energy from relatively small amounts of matter. Further posited by the scholar, even small nuclear devices can devastate a city by blast, fire and radiation. It is on this basis that many scholars have considered nuclear weapons as weapons of heat and mass destruction, and their use and control has been a major aspect of international policy since their debut.

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN (2017) described nuclear weapons are the most destructive, inhumane

and indiscriminate weapons ever created. Both in the scale of the devastation they cause and in their uniquely persistent, spreading, genetically damaging radioactive fallout, they are unlike any other weapons. According to the institution, a single nuclear bomb detonated over a large city could kill millions of people, while the use of tens or hundreds of nuclear bombs would disrupt the global climate, causing widespread famine

Emphasizing the use of nuclear weapons globally, Air Force Historical Support Division (n.d.) claimed that nuclear weapons have only twice been used in warfare, both times by the United States against Japan at the end of World War II. On August 6, 1945, the United States Army Air Forces detonated a uranium gun-type fission bomb nicknamed "Little Boy" over the Japanese city of Hiroshima; three days later, on August 9, the USAAF detonated a plutonium implosion-type fission bomb nicknamed "Fat Man" over the Japanese city of Nagasaki. These bombings caused injuries that resulted in the deaths of approximately 200,000 civilians and military personnel.

In the view of Forsyth (2017), nuclear weapons play an important role in the conduct of international relations as it makes statesmen cautious in the face of grave danger and reduce the likelihood of war among nuclear powers. More so, the scholar maintained that statesmen are not sensitive to the number of nuclear weapons a state might possess; they are only sensitive to whether a state has them at all.

On a separate ground, Glaser (2023) described nuclear weapons based on its attributes and features such as; its capability of explosive energy release, its ability for mass destruction, or its possible use for warlike purposes. Citing the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco (which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the

Caribbean), the scholar further considered nuclear weapon as any device which is capable of releasing nuclear energy in an uncontrolled manner and which has a group of characteristics that are appropriate for use for warlike purposes.

Global Security

There has been no generally acceptable definition of global security by scholars across the globe as the term remains socially constructed. Nevertheless, the only point of consensus on global security in the reviewed literature is that global security means same as international security.

In the view of Buzan and Hansen (2009), global security encompasses the measures taken by states and international organizations towards ensuring mutual survival and safety. The scholars maintained that such measures include military action taken by an individual state and various diplomatic agreements; such as treaties and conventions. Critically, from the view of these scholars, international securities are invariably linked to national security as measures/actions taken by states in securing and safeguarding their territories.

Put differently, Preece (2011) described security as a core value of human. In this view, to be secured is to be uncontrolled by danger or fear. Further posited by the scholar, without security, there would be no place for human activities and engagements.

To Degaut (2015), security means national security, while other goals are secondary. In this view, national security is synonymous with national interest, which stresses that the security policy subordinates any other interests to those of the nation. Similarly, Morgenthau (1993), an exponent of realism, in his Book 'Politics among Nations: the struggle for Power and Peace' maintained that the rationality of statesmen and their

actions in terms of national interest could be seen as the pursuit of power. From this angle, security is considered a derivative of power.

To Williams (2013), security is considered the absence of threats, and this seems to encompass the essence and the central idea of the notion of security. Put differently, Rothschild (1995) considered security to encompass threats that no longer have a purely military character. Four dimensions of security outlined by the scholar include; that, it starts from the security of nations, to the security of groups and individuals, followed by the security of nations to the security of the international systems, the third is what he described as the horizontal extension, that is, from military aspect to political, social, economic, environmental and human aspects while the fourth one is, the political responsibility of ensuring security. To Brauch (2011), security is an inherently subjective value, that is, an inter-subjective value. In this view, security is expected to be achieved once the perception and fears of security threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks are overcome.

Nuclear Weapon Activities and Global Security

It is very important to note that the world at present is faced with nuclear threats, no thanks to several missile tests being carried out by North Korea. Global Security has become the most discussed topic than any other in the International community since the September 11, 2001 attack. In the pursuit of peace and security, wars have been fought to topple the Taliban and the Iraqi leadership, war against terror and insecurity has been declared, the European Union has set up intervention troops with a global scope of action, border controls have been tightened and the powers of the security apparatuses have been upgraded and enhanced. Have all these actions resulted in more security? Fucks (2006)

Clearly, the response to this question will depend on who is answering it. It inevitably becomes a matter of who defines what security means on a global scale. For the former United States of America's Secretary of Defense as quoted in Fucks (2006), Security means something different from what it does to a rice farmer in India, an African market woman, or a Muslim teenager in Europe. Security can mean the defense against terrorist attacks or preventing extremist states from coming into possession of nuclear weapons. In Sudan, it means protection against genocide, while the populations of the world's poor houses are threatened primarily with hunger, lack of water and epidemics. Violence therefore, is multi-faceted. It can be in the form of social squalor, or in the uniform of a paramilitary soldier; it can have the face of a torturer, or that of a fanatic who is prepared to leave corpses in his wake. And its causes are as manifold as its forms of expression (Fucks, 2006). What this means are many; first, one must not mistake security for the safety of the wealthy world. That does not address the multitude of threats to human security, and it divides the peoples rather than seeking a common protective balance. In the age of globalization, there cannot be security only for the prosperous minority of the world's population.

Secondly, no one should define security solely in military terms. Such a definition may not address the many root causes that trigger violent conflicts. Military force can be necessary to stop wars and genocides. This was the case in the Balkans; unfortunately, it did not work in Rwanda. Military intervention can also become necessary to topple a perceived terrorist regime, such as in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan, which had become a danger to global security, even as it is now clear that peace cannot be achieved with war. It is only possible with good policies that discourage the breeding grounds

for violence. Security as a concept has long bothered the minds of students of International Relations. There exists a wide range of discourse about the state being the most important aspect of the concept of traditional security. According to Buzan (1999), Security has been perceived to be the race for freedom from all forms of Violence and threat and the capability of nations and societies to be able to maintain their independent and territorial identity as including their functional integrity against the forces of change, often seen as a threat to their peace. The fundamental and most important aspect of security is Survival, although, to a reasonable extent, it also includes a significant degree of worries about its conditions of existence. But then, when this perceived degree of worry does to match the level of exigency attached to "security" (that identifies imminent danger as substantial enough to authorize any emergency action and exceptional reactions which could comprise of the employment of force) and hence becomes an integral aspect of our daily uncertainties of life is one of the difficulties of the concept (Buzan, 1999). Buzan articulated security as, been about the quest for freedom from all forms of imminent danger and the capabilities possessed by countries and subsequently societies in the maintenance of their self-identity and their functional integrity against potential or perceived enemies of change, who may be hostile. Therefore, the realists view of security where it is seen as a derivative power; relegates the complex concept of security to a mere synonym for power (Buzan, 2008). This opinion however, would have been seen as being relevant only if it came during the period of the First and Second World Wars, where states were in a constant pursuit for power. However, this same concept of security has become more complicated with diverse aspects in the post-Cold War era. Buzan (1999) opined that the

concept of security was too narrowly conceptualized. His simple objective was geared towards offering a wider conceptual structure of security by bringing in concepts that hitherto were not considered to be a part of the puzzle surrounding security, such as global and regional security as well as environmental and societal aspects of security. Buzan's conception of security is broader; and while he places his views in the same rank as neorealist beliefs like anarchy, the centrality of his views is constructivist, meaning that he does not accept the popular norm, rather, he carefully examines each of the elements of what he may consider to be the main security package one after the other to arrive at a well-informed conclusion.

A broader examination of the concept of security may unintentionally give rise to more concerns on the one hand, between established organizations and security outfits which, before now, were hardly noticed, and on the other hand, the dynamic evolution of the international processes with a focus on security. Following Arnold Wolfer's (1952) submission, many scholars in the field of security today start by making declarations about security being a contested issue (Dalby, 1997). This, to a large extent, is true, especially for those who start from the premise that security is an objective condition which should have just one meaning. Moreover, the meaning of security is contestable if only one international relations perspective seeks to impose its meaning of the concept on others. Security implies the protection of the people and the preservation of their norms, rules and institutions, in the face of military and non-military threats (Makinda, 2005). This latest version considers natural catastrophes, the deterioration of the ecology and environmental degradation, economic crisis, infringement on fundamental rights, severe poverty, and flagrant abuse of democratic norms and rights. This nature of security

includes the preservation of states and the structures, principles and institutions on which states are anchored, but only to the extent that protection of state boundaries, the governing structures and elites is not privileged over people. The construction of security is based on the assumption that people are the foundations of political communities and states. Therefore, the security of states is derived from that of the people. Makinda (2005) posits that this angle of security is akin to that of any other concept, is not static. As cultural norms, rules and institutions evolve, the nature of security also has to evolve. The new developments at the international level show that the current security environment involves several actors: nation states, non-state actors, non-governmental organizations, mega-corporations, and international organizations. The international organizations only diversify the instruments of action and set up a confusing international system by increasing the number of actors and their problems related to new sources of conflict, the multiplication of means to create war. These developments have their price expressed in unpredictability and vulnerability, and the interdependencies generate more and more threats. Security is a central organizing concept of International Relations, both in theory and in practice. For most accounts of International Relations, the pursuit of security propels the behaviour of players while the pledge to provide security corroborates the political validity of key institutions in global politics (Burke, Lee-Koo, & McDonald, 2016). This same scenario applies to any state whose activities are driven by a pursuit for survival (Waltz, 1979) or an obligation to preserve and advance its core values (Wolfers, 1952; Katzenstein, 1996) and whose political validity is based on its capability to protect its citizens in a Hobbesian state of nature (Williams, 1998).

This also applies to intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, whose Charter lists the maintenance of international peace and security as its first purpose. In international relations parlance, it is common to use the "phrases of global security, continental security, regional security, sub-regional security, national security, equal security, collective security, Common security, and so on to express the basis of power relations (David, 2008) amid the diversification of threats, multiplication of actors, concerns for identifying strategies and optimization solutions.

In the specialized body of knowledge, it is observed that the classical approach of security extends into the realist views of security. It was popular during the days of the Cold War, though its use in the international arena dates back longer, beginning with the establishment of the first formation of states (Lasan, 2010). Traditionally, the idea of security was associated with the military, defence and balance of forces internationally in terms of military power. In this sense, one can even suggest that the basic assumption of the traditional view where the security is fundamentally linked with the military dimensions of interactions between nation states. In this sense, the states are seen to be the most important, sometimes, the only actors in international relations which alone can ensure the security of citizens both nationally and internationally, and its primary concern is ensuring security. In order to ensure security, states are always trying to maximize their power in an environment considered anarchical, the anarchy that characterizes the configuration of the international environment. The anarchy resulting from the observation that while internally there is leadership, the legitimacy and the monopoly of using force internally is held by the state. At the international level, these features are absent.

The United Nations, a forum for all states, is significant in the analysis of threats to security as identified by it in its official documents. Thus, in the United Nations Report titled, "A more secure world-our common responsibility", the following threats to global security are listed: international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, organised crime networks, environmental problems, and dangerous widening development gaps between the developed and underdeveloped world. Remember that the traditional notions of security focused on the use of force between the great powers during the Cold War and after its end had to be reformulated to reflect the transforming nature of conflict in what today is the new security agenda, the new security manifestations and the new game rules of the security policy. Global security in the current context has become the expression of building new international relations, which is influenced and shaped 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 organizations (David, 2008).

There is a remarkable consensus on redefining the parameters of global security since the start of the new century. This consensus is propelled by the post-Cold War coalescence around the centrality of human security and the popular idea of development as freedom. Both conceptions represent 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 aroused a new thinking 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 pursuit of global security, states fight to secure their roles as central agents of security; however, the focal attention is less on protecting itself as a standard procedure than on the preservation of the norms, ethos, and institutions of an international society (McDonald, 2008). Global security is perceived as the preservation of the ethos of an international society: it is to be accomplished by states working in collaboration through international institutions, and possible threats to their 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 in this regard 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 & McDonald, 2013). This angle of security focuses on transnational security issues as widely visible in contemporary international politics. After all, the key institutions of international society emerged precisely to address such concerns, including the maintenance of international peace and security in the context of the United Nations. This is defined on the basis of accepted claims about private rights, the need for collaboration, and also a dire need to

critically civilize the behaviour of nations toward individual ends.

Global security is therefore a level of international relations which ensures the security of each state. This is the outcome of genuine efforts and activities of the international system, a body of rules and institutions, geared towards eliminating the rise in armed conflicts, political instability, and stunted economic growth while at the same time minimize the impact of global issues. Global security is the threat of armed aggression, external pressures, military as well as non-military, in international relations. The concept of global security has greatly evolved from what we knew it to be for a long time in the past. The old bi-polar international system that regulated relations between states has drastically restricted itself against the changing threats, needs and requirements of states, but has nevertheless, remained an inadequate barrier for international peace and security. Perhaps, the key to global security lies in furthering the process of enhancing democracy in member states and reversing processes of securing states. However, many scholars who have adopted a long-term perspective have argued over the years for a major structural transformation of the international system.

Given the destructive powers of nuclear devices and other technological weapons of mass destruction, Herz (1957), Morgenthau (1948), Deudney (1999), and Wendt (2003), among others, have argued for a global monopoly of legitimate violence. In their view, it is possible that a few nation states could legitimately retain the exclusive right to possess nuclear weapons for the next fifty, hundred or two hundred years. Moreover, as long as a few separate states possess and control nuclear weapons and a few others are simultaneously trying to acquire them, it is possible that these weapons will eventually be used. The future of humanity may

therefore, depend upon a transformation of the international or world system into something akin to a Weberian world state.

Wendt (1995) in his own view opines that traditional approaches to global security usually focus on state actors and their military capacities to protect national security. However, over the last decades, the views about security have been extended to incorporate the challenges of the twenty-first-century globalized international community, its rapid technological developments and global threats that emerged out of this process. It is in the same line of thought that Al-Rodhan (2007) proposed what he called the multi-sum security principle, which is based on the assumption that, in a globalized world, security can no longer be thought of as a zero-sum game involving only nations. Global security, rather, consists of five dimensions that encompasses national, environmental, human, transnational, and even trans-cultural aspects of security, thus, global security and the security of any state or culture will be difficult to achieve good governance at all levels that guarantees security through justice for all individuals, states, and cultures (Al-Rodhan, 2007). A critical view of these five dimensions reveals a different set of stratifications. The first aspect talks about human security, an area that makes the principal designated aspect of security the citizens and not the state. The second aspect has to do with environmental security and comprises of issues like climate change, global warming, and access to resources. The third substratum refers to national security, as perceived to be connected to a state's exclusive privilege over its adoption of force in a given territory and as an underlying aspect of security which focuses on the military and policing part of security.

Democratic governance and a vibrant civil society may ultimately be more imperative

for security than an army. Non-military options are important to security and stability. Countries in the world, and especially the very weak nations and communities, faced with a multitude of pressures. They are confronted with a debilitating combination of rising competition for resources, severe environmental breakdown, the resurgence of highly contagious diseases, extreme poverty and growing wealth disparities, demographic pressures, and joblessness and livelihood insecurity (Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2006). At this point, it is clear that global security is multi-faceted to include concentration on human security, ecology, national, international and trans-borders security. On human security, the American Institute of Peace (2020) views it as the absence of threats to the vital interests of individual people on a worldwide basis. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report originated the concept as an option to the traditional concept of national security. Human security is security as applied to people rather than territories. It includes "...freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, safety or lives," involving both "...safety of citizens, people from threats of violence, has to do with environmental security and comprises issues like climate change, global warming, and access to resources.

The third substratum refers to national security, as perceived to be connected to a state's exclusive privilege over its monopoly of force in a given territory and as an underlying aspect of security, which focuses on the military and policing part of security.

The fourth substratum thus handles transnational threats like organized crimes, activities of terrorist cells and not forgetting, human trafficking, just as it is happening between the Hamas group and the State of

Israel currently. Ultimately, the rectitude of multiple cultural and civilizational forms tends to tackle the problem with trans-cultural security. In agreement with this diverse security framework, all the dimensions of security need to be addressed to provide a fair and sustainable global security. It therefore calls for collaborative interaction between nations and cordial relations between cultural groups and civilizations. Kofi Annan, while explaining what constitutes a global security threat, asserts that any event or process that causes deaths on a large scale or that leads to the lessening of life chances, and which undermines states as the basic unit of the international system, is qualified to be a threat to global peace and security. According to him, there are six major clusters of threats and they include; economic and social threats, including poverty and deadly infectious disease; inter-state conflict and rivalry; internal violence, including civil war, state collapse and genocide; transnational crimes, terrorist activities, chemical, nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction as well as radiological (The Economist, 2014).

Nuclear weapons technology and its military applicability marked a major milestone in international relations and security studies within and outside military academies, and the way wars are waged. For many countries, nuclear weapons technology will constantly be a status symbol, which creates a clear difference between the haves and the have-nots. The proliferation of nuclear weapons armament requires very sophisticated and highly developed scientific community, a technology that not every country has or can afford and maintain. Nuclear weapons technology has created 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, use these weapons when she deems necessary.

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

Could the spread of nuclear weapons be good news? Could nuclear deterrence provide stability, as some argued during the long peace between the United States of America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War? It has been argued for some time now that the nuclear arms race in the Middle East has the potential to bring stability to that volatile region (Rosen, 1977). This has been called Balance of Terror. Even one analyst has argued that nuclear deterrence in South Asia is working despite the tensions between India and Pakistan (Ganguly, 2008).

Others have asserted in more general terms that proliferation may serve the global desire for peace (Bueno de Mesquita & Riker, 1982) and that the spread of nuclear weapons is something that we have worried too much about and tried too hard to stop. The determined widespread nature of nuclear weapons is more to be welcomed than feared (Waltz, 1982). When the Cold War eventually ended, it evoked an argument to the effect that stability in Europe would be enhanced if Germany acquired nuclear

weapons and Ukraine developed nuclear weapons, which would serve as a potential deterrent against the Russian state (Mearsheimer, 2001). Another proliferation optimist argues that the leaders of medium and small powers alike tend to be extremely cautious concerning the nuclear weapons they possess; the proof being that, to date, in every region where these weapons have been introduced, large-scale inter-state warfare has disappeared (Creveld, 1993). Although Cirincione (2013) did not go into great depth about the posture of the North Korean government and its H-bomb, nevertheless, he nevertheless provided a brief and sketchy analysis of the state of arsenals and the number of warheads, even the different types of warheads in storage in states like the United States of America and Russia. With many references made to previous studies on nuclear weapons and potential accidents and exchanges, Cirincione went on to give crippling scenarios by looking at events of the past and described how such events are possible today. As the 1995 and 2007 incidents demonstrate the dangers from the accidents, miscalculations and misunderstandings involving the existing nuclear arsenals are not confined to the Cold War past. In similar words, an exponential increase in the quest for nuclear missiles is not the worst prevalent danger as it pertains to these weapons. With many warheads ready for use and many more stored in a long wait for decommission and deactivation, target coordinates can be uploaded into a warhead's guidance systems within minutes, so the warheads remain on high alert status similar to what was maintained during the period of the Cold War (Cirincione, 2013). Accordingly, the risk of unauthorised or accidental launches remains, and since accidents have happened in the past, one should not lose sight of the potential for a quick, simple, but immensely costly and destructive accident to happen. Cirincione

also illustrates human's slow capacity for learning from mistakes. He cited a number of accidents involving B-52s armed with nuclear weapons that crashed in 1962 (Goldsboro, North Carolina), 1966 (Palomares, Spain) and 1968 (Thule, Greenland). It was only after several close cases that the Air force accepted to put a halt to its policy of keeping professional bombers in possession of nuclear warheads.

One major objection to optimism about the impact of the great rise in the quest for nuclear weapons in the developing countries involves the vulnerable nature of nuclear forces. One of the possible virtues of the large nuclear forces in the hands of the USSR and America was that they made both states relatively safe from the destabilizing impact of technological breakthroughs (Intriligator and Brito, 1984). Even without such breakthroughs, emerging nuclear forces in the developing world are vulnerable to pre-emptive strikes, and so they will not tempt such strikes. Even if both sides prefer not to pre-empt, each may fear that the other side will; consequently, both may decide to launch at the slightest suspicion of an attack (Fetter, 1991). Cirincione (2013), also explored fiscal determination and the consequences of nuclear militarization. Looking at the initiatives undertaken during the Obama administration, a reorientation of the United States of America's nuclear policy reflected what is referred to as the logic of zero. As Cirincione informs readers, the fiscal logic of zero reinforces the strategic appeal of preventing nuclear catastrophe by eliminating nuclear weapons. However, the question stemming from his views raises some sharp points of debate about whether the world is safer as long as two states own ninety-five percent of the global nuclear arsenal, or if everyone would be better off if there were an impartial distribution of nuclear warheads. There is certainly no clear or concise answer here; however, Cirincione

(2015) believes that if states are consumed with realists' accounts of the world and states' pursuits for security and power, there might then be little hope of a more secure future. Neither the United States of America nor Russia, according to him, will take even these modest steps if it believes that the global nuclear threat environment is increasing; that large nuclear arsenals are essential to security, or that decreasing their arsenals will encourage other states to increase theirs.

Similarly, in the case of South Asia, the decade since the nuclear tests suggests that a principal risk of nuclear proliferation is not that the leaders of these new states with nuclear weapons capability may have tendencies of being irrational or Suicidal, or even that organizational and other pathologies will result in suboptimal policy formulation. The danger, rather, is that leaders may weigh their strategic options and reasonably conclude that risky behaviour best serves their interests. When North Korean leaders threatened to build nuclear weapons in the early 1990s, the United States, fearing an arms race in East Asia, responded with its threats of economic sanctions and considered an attack on North Korea's facilities. North Korea responded by deploying many more troops on the border with South Korea, and in For several weeks in 1994, a replay of the 1950s Korean War was considered a real possibility. After negotiations, Pyongyang agreed to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear programme in exchange for the United States of America's funds to construct nuclear power generations that would not yield plutonium. North Korea revealed in 2002 that it did not dismantle its nuclear materials production programme.

Multiparty talks failed to sufficiently address the threat of North Korean nuclear proliferation. Attention then shifted to

dismantling or preventing further development of North Korea's nuclear programme. Likewise, in 2007, Pyongyang assented to eventually cease its programme but this agreement faltered on North Korean rejection of the terms of verification. In 2009, North Korea test-fired another ballistic missile, declared that it was restarting its atomic "weapons programme and would begin enriching uranium and conducted a second nuclear test. The United Nations responded with tougher sanctions on North Korea, and America announced it would intercept North Korean ships suspected of carrying nuclear material (Kaarbo & Ray, 2008).

Why would North Korea develop nuclear weapons? The North Koreans have presented a rationale for developing such a weapon. They point out that the United States of America, which is in possession of the highest number of nuclear weapons in the world today, has labeled North Korea a member of the axis of evil, thereby making the country a possible target of pre-emptive attack (Oh & Hassig, 2004). Others, however, see North Korea's actions stemming more from the regime's strategy of keeping North Korea isolated in order to remain in control of its people and from the economic rewards that it believes it can get from the international community in exchange for promises to surrender its nuclear facility and programme (Oh & Hassig, 2004).

Beyond the North Korea case, it is clear that more states like Iraq, India, and Pakistan might acquire nuclear weapons, and maybe the threat that these new owners of nuclear weapons will actually use them may be greater than that which existed during the Cold War. International attention to the quest for nuclear arms proliferation has quickly risen since the Cold War came to an end. Today, not only are states' desires for nuclear

weapons a concern, but many worry about nuclear capabilities acquired by non-state actors, such as terrorist groups. According to Allison (2004), given the number of actors with serious intent, the accessibility of weapons or nuclear materials from which elementary weapons could be constructed, and the almost limitless ways in which terrorists could smuggle a weapon through American borders... a nuclear terrorist attack on America in the decade ahead is more likely than not (Allison, 2004). Most recently, the international community became concerned that, given the internal conflict in Pakistan, that country's nuclear arsenal is inadequately secured (Sanger, 2009).

Scholars have however commented on the consequential effects of North Korea nuclear weapon on the international security. Viewed in Onyekachi & Hyginus (2020), the persistent nuclear weapon activities by the North Korea have drawn the attention of the international community amidst the dangers it poses to the security. The scholar asserted that the nuclear weapon activities have continued to inflict major damage on the countries of the world, particularly the United States and its allies.

Observed in the report of United States Geological Survey (USGS) as quoted by Onyekachi & Hyginus (2020), the Hwasong-12 launched by North Korea flew successfully and unopposed over Japan (one of its potential major targets) as it travelled to half its maximum operation range. Neither Japanese nor the American missile defense system based in or near Japan attempted to intercept the missile. This emboldened North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to test launch an ICBM over the same trajectory but over far greater distance. Such a test is signal to the international bodies that North Korea's deterrent poses a direct and series threat to the United States homeland. Similarly, South

Korea's Intelligence service indicated that the persistent nuclear weapon tests is very dangerous and troubling the global security.

Observed in the report of Connolly (2018, November 18), the persistent nuclear weapon activities and proliferation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK-North Korea) has continued to pose considerable challenges for regional and international security. According to the report, the insecurity posed by the nuclear weapon activities of the North Korea has continued despite recent diplomatic engagement with North Korea. The same report also established that the volatile security position in North Korea has direct security implications for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies; and in addition, North Korea has directly threatened two (2) NATO partner countries in the region; that the Republic of Korea and Japan; as well as directly threatening the United States and continued leveling credible military threats to all allies.

Viewed in Kelly (2017), a statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stressed at the 2018 Munich Security Conference claimed reads "North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes which pose a threat to us all. All allies are not within range of North Korean missiles. Pyongyang is closer to Munich than it is to Washington DC and therefore, we must put maximum pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear programme, by political and diplomatic means and, not least, through effective economic sanctions". The Secretary General equally claimed that North Korea's ballistic and nuclear weapons programmes pose a global threat to global security and this requires a global response.

Similarly, International Bar Association (2017) observe that oppressive regime in

Pyongyang and its nuclear weapons activities have constituted among the worst in the human rights records with severe and destructive consequences on global security. According to the report, the North Korea has committed multiple crimes against humanity which encompasses extermination, inhuman torture, enslavement, and murder among many more. The report also claimed that hundreds of thousands of North Koreans have perished in prison camps as North Korea diverts domestic resources and sometimes blocks international aid from reaching vulnerable North Korean population. In the end, perhaps, it is most important to point out that the costs of guessing wrong on this issue are not equal in both directions. If nuclear proliferation is discouraged when it can actually be beneficial, the cost is the loss of a boost to stability and a somewhat larger probability of conventional wars. If proliferation is encouraged, then, it is actually dangerous even if it makes war a less rational option, then tolerating or encouraging proliferation would be experimentation in the absence of any solid evidence on which to base estimates of the results. The policy choices box of nuclear proliferation presents some of the issues surrounding proliferation and preventive efforts.

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 hope that this agreement would restrict the nuclear club to a membership of five (China, France, USSR, Great Britain, and the United States) was crushed in May 1974 when India exploded its first nuclear device. In 1995, the NPT was extended, and by 2003, one hundred and eighty-nine States had signed the treaty, making it, the most widely-adhered-to-arms control treaty in

history, according to the United States Department of State in Kaarbo & Ray (2008).

Although, North Korea consented to freezing and eventually dismantled its nuclear weapons programme under the 1994 United States of America- North Korean Framework Agreement, she announced in 2002 that she had continued to develop her nuclear materials programme and withdrew from the NPT. Talks to get North Korea to re-enter the treaty were stalled for many years before her first nuclear weapons in 2006 (Kaarbo & Ray, 2008). India, Israel and Pakistan have all refused to sign the treaty.

In addition to the NPT being extended, there have been several more specific, significant successes in the anti-nuclear proliferation effort in recent years. For example, in the early 1990s, South Africa dismantled its arsenal of six nuclear weapons and signed the NPT in 1991. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have not only transferred to Russia all the strategic and nuclear warheads they inherited as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have also joined the NPT and opened their nuclear facilities for inspection by the renowned International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Algeria agreed to join the NPT in 1995 and Libya announced in 2003 that it would comply with the treaty. Argentina and Brazil have brought into force, a nuclear free zone in that part of the world through the Treaty of Tlatelolco and agreed to IAEA inspections.

Treaties have also created nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Southeast Asia and Central Asia. International agreements have been reached that designate Antarctica, outer space, seabed and moon, as de-nuclearised areas (Kaarbo & Ray, 2008). In addition to the NPT, decades of multilateral negotiations produced the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), banning all testing of nuclear weapons. Today, one hundred and forty-eight

countries have ratified the treaty. Although, America originally signed the treaty, but according to Kaarbo & Ray (2008) its Senate rejected it in 1999; The Senate vote marked at least a temporary setback for international efforts to bring the CTBT into force, since the USA is one of the 44 states which must ratify the treaty in order for it to enter into force. The treaty's prospects was given a boost, however, when the Russian Duma voted overwhelmingly to ratify it on April 21, 2000... in addition, in September (2000) the Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vaipayee pledged that his government would not conduct further nuclear testing while it attempted to build a consensus on signing the CTBT (Kaarbo & Ray, 2008).

By 2009, however, the treaty had not entered into force as five of the forty-four necessary states (China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, and United States of America) had not yet ratified the treaty. President Obama promised to push for America's ratification, but strong opposition in congress persists (Cooper & Sanger, 2009). Opposition to the building of a Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDs) came from within America. The controversy obstructed efforts to further reduce strategic nuclear arms and gave rise to international concern that the entire framework of nuclear arms control was in danger of breaking down (Cooper & Sanger, 2009).

Oppositions to BMDs are based on the concern that they will undermine stability by compromising second-strike capability, the foundation of nuclear deterrence and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Opponents argue that BMDs do not address the types of threats, such as from terrorists with crude weapons that states are more likely to face. Supporters counter that BMDs address the real threat from rogue states who are

acquiring ballistic missile technology and they can decrease the probability of such an attack by making the probability of success less likely (Kile, 2002).

Proliferation of nuclear weapons in a post-Cold War, post 9-11 world has had significant consequences for the structure and management of global security policy. At the onset, the introduction of ballistic and nuclear weapons was hugely confusing with a misleading conventional approach to peace and war, such as limited warfare, arms, armies, ammunitions, distinctions and strategy and between armed fighters and civilians. Nuclear weapons on a broader perspective have somehow been adopted and rationalized, making them strategically functional within the ambience of global security (Katona, Sullivan & Intriligator, 2006). Since 9/11, nuclear weapons have adopted a significant posture in the justification of the United States of America's absolutist security agenda; for instance, Pyongyang's continued testing of its ballistic and nuclear devices alongside Tehran's resolve to acquire nuclear weapons capability have had serious consequences on global security policy.

Theoretically, a nuclear power cannot logically engage a non-nuclear state in actual nuclear combat; indeed, there is no functional, complimentary relationship between the two; - total death neutralizes the war. This also holds for engagement between nuclear powers; wherein the obliteration of all states in the world will in fact, result from the mass use of nuclear weapons. Yet, America has forcefully asserted its right to employ its nuclear and ballistic warhead against any state deemed a grave threat, despite the first pillar of the NPT (Freedman, 2003). The five nuclear states identified in the NPT- that is, America (joined 1968), United Kingdom (1968), Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), now Russia

(joined 1968), France joined 1992) and China joined 1992) - have stated that nuclear weapons will not be used against states that do not possess nuclear weapons except in response to a nuclear attack or conventional attack in alliance with a state that sincerely does not have nuclear weapons. However, this policy has not been incorporated formally into the NPT, and practice has deviated from policy. America has indicated that it may use nuclear weapons in response to a non-conventional attack by rogue states and that it had nuclear weapons targeted at North Korea while it was non-nuclear from 1959 to 1991 (Astrada, 2010).

The strategy of pre-emption is one of the more recent hegemonic acts of controlling nuclear weapon proliferation. The Gulf War II is reflective of a United States of America's policy to forestall or prevent hostile acts of aggressors with the United States of America's disapproval of possession of nuclear technology being considered a hostile act via pre-emptive military action (Astrada, 2010). Frieman (2004) argues that the United States of America's approach is reflective of an effort to preserve a world that no longer exists- a world in which weapons of mass destruction remains the exclusive prerogative of America and its allies. Initially, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), by assuming the role of an ominous, moral enemy, provided fodder for channeling and giving shape to nuclear weapon strategies. The loss of the bipolar ballast and the advent of ubiquitous terror after 9/11 have redirected the United States of America's efforts regarding containment and subsequently a restrain towards nuclear weapons via preventing undesirables (rogue states and their terrorist clients) from attaining nuclear technologies, especially since the development and possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has assumed even greater significance for (rogue) states that

vociferously reject the United States of America's power.

In light of the hegemonic global context that emerged after the USSR imploded, nuclear weapons have become an effective means of deterring America from invading, occupying or both (Smith, 2006). According to Smith (2006); the trouble is that the United States does not have a clear sense of the goals or most rogue states. According to Astrada (2010), with regards to nuclear weapons, the world has changed faster than the United States of America's policy. The growing security threats to the Washington, its allies and friends and even Russia have now been from contemptuous states, terrorist groups and other splinter groups who are seeking weapons of mass destruction and the avenues to deliver them. Imminent danger also comes from insecure nuclear stockpiles and the increase in the possession of dangerous technologies (Dietrich, 2005). Few would probably argue against the idea that nuclear weapons pose one of the biggest challenges to global security today, security amidst nascent ambitions of some states to acquire nuclear arsenals," will increasingly rely on multilateral cooperation in addition to much broader engagement with even regular people if it is to move beyond a mere concept. Benedict (2012) insists; to liberate the international community from the potential dangers posed by nuclear weapons, United States of America and Russian citizens in particular, must demand their rightful places in the nuclear discussion table and rekindle their democracies by working with each other. Likewise, both countries should also, get rid of nuclear weapons once and for all before the weapons get rid of us (Benedict, 2012).

There is of course, no single way out of looking at and recognizing what nuclear non-proliferation means, nor can we point fingers at a single source of threat. Despite the fact

that the Cold War has come to an end, the imminent danger posed by nuclear weapons, irrespective of the popular believe that it poses no less of a danger to national, regional and international security architectures.

Methodology

The study is exploratory in typology and built on qualitative orientation. The researcher explored the internet and sourced for various secondary data relevant to the phenomenon under study. Presented data were contently explained. Findings were drawn from inferences derived from reviewed literature and the disposition of available secondary data on the internet, which includes; published journal articles, various reportages on global security as regards North Korea's nuclear weapon programmes, media publications, official reports among others; all which enabled the researcher to make recommendations based on findings.

Theoretical Framework

Central to establishing the links between North Korean Nuclear weapons programmes and global security is Offensive Realism. Propounded by John Mearsheimer, the theory serves a tool of analysis in understanding why states/nations are inherently power-seeking and strive for dominance to ensure their survival in the global world which is believed to be anarchical (Mearsheimer, 2001). The lead exponents of Offensive include scholars such as Robert Gilpin Eric Labs, Dylan Motin, Sebastian Rosato, Randall

Schweller and FareedZakaria. The theory is enriched in its capabilities in offering insights into the North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes motivations and the subsequent global security threats. The central argument of the theory rests on the fact that states/nations operate in an international system that is anarchical in nature. Thus, every state prioritizes its own survival by maximizing power, meanwhile the pursuit of

power sometimes heighten insecurity. This position aligns with North Korea's maximization of nuclear weapon programmes as the country perceived nuclear power as a tool in deterring external threats and ensures its regime survival.

In addition, North Korea's regime sees nuclear weapon as a guarantor against foreign intervention, most especially from the United States and her close allies (Reuters, 2025; February 18). Since Offensive Realism claims that states utilize their power to maximise strategic advantage, similarly, North Korea has continued to employ her nuclear weapon programme as a tool for coercive diplomacy. More so, North Korea's regime has continued to influence international negotiations, gain political recognition, and secure economic aids among others, through her nuclear capabilities.

Nevertheless, Offensive Realism suggests that the pursuit of power can lead to increased violence and conflict. Similarly, North Korea's nuclear ambitions increased tensions on Korean Peninsula among others, thereby increasing the risks of miscalculations. Consequently, the International Community has continued to face several challenges in addressing the global security risks from North Korea's nuclear weapon programmes as all diplomatic and economic sanctions have proven ineffective in curbing North Korea's nuclear weapons advancement. The ineffectiveness of numerous sanctions against North Korean regime also raises questions about global system security.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In January 2016, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear weapons test, contravening international regulations. This test marked the first instance in which North Korea claimed possession of thermonuclear or hydrogen explosive capabilities. The

following month, North Korea launched a long-range ballistic missile, demonstrating its purported technological capacity to target any nation globally.

Experts estimate that North Korea's KN-14 missile has a range of five thousand (5,000) to six thousand (6,000) miles, prompting worldwide concern. In response, Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul have deployed Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems to safeguard their territories and military forces from potential North Korean attacks. During North Korea's long-range missile tests in 2009 and 2012, the United States and its allies reportedly mobilised various BMD systems, in addition to deploying regional intelligence-gathering capabilities (Lovelace, 2017). Japan positioned Patriot interceptor batteries around Tokyo and on its south-western islands to counter potential errant missiles or debris threatening Japanese territory, while Aegis BMD ships were also deployed to the area. Amidst heightened tensions in spring 2013, the United States military expedited the deployment of a ground-based Terminal High Altitude Air Defence (THAAD) BMD system to Guam, two years ahead of schedule (Lovelace, 2017). These missile tests by North Korea have not only revealed insights into her advanced technological capabilities but also represent a continuation of her aggressive foreign policy, technological demonstration, and the character and ideology of her leadership, collectively indicating that North Korea has become a legitimate threat to global peace and security.

North Korea's nuclear and ballistic weapons ambitions have generated security concerns beyond the United States and Northeast Asia, reverberating globally. The current non-nuclear weapons states in Northeast Asia may be compelled by North Korea's actions to initiate their own nuclear weapons programmes. Should this nuclear cascade

commence, Japan, which has been reassessing its nuclear options, would likely be the first to act, and followed by South Korea's response to the changing stances of both North Korea and Japan. Subsequently, China might further enhance its nuclear capabilities in reaction to a nuclear-armed Japan and Korean Peninsula, potentially reigniting Taiwan's interest in nuclear weapons capacity (Hughes, 2007).

While China advocates for the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and disapproves of nuclear provocations, it considers this issue secondary to maintaining North Korea's stability (Merced, 2016). China's threat perception of North Korean nuclear weapons is relatively low; however, it is concerned about nuclear proliferation in the region, particularly the implications of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan acquiring nuclear capabilities. China fears that North Korea might provoke a pre-emptive attack by the United States, triggering massive refugee flows into China and resulting in a unified Korea under American influence. Beijing would prefer the United States to resolve the current crisis by offering North Korea the security guarantees it seeks. Thus, China aims to achieve three primary objectives: no nuclear weapons, no war, and no North Korean collapse. However, North Korea has constructed some of its infrastructure near the Chinese border. Consequently, in addition to providing a degree of protection for its interests in the Security Council, Beijing is perceived as insincere in implementing the Council's sanctions. China remains North Korea's primary economic partner, with trade deals totaling over \$6.39 billion as of 2014, accounting for more than ninety percent of North Korea's total trade (Frank, 2015). China also provides essential food and energy aid to sustain the North Korean regime. China's paramount priority appears to be preventing North Korea's collapse.

The United States exercises extreme caution in conducting operations near China's border with North Korea. While China does not anticipate direct physical damage to its property, the economic repercussions of war, potential refugee influx, and the presence of United States-South Korea forces near its border remain China's primary concerns (Merced, 2016). Although China publicly supports Korean reunification, this support assumes that the resulting Korean state would not be anti-Chinese. Furthermore, Beijing is averse to the entire Korean Peninsula adopting capitalism or having American troops stationed near its border. Beijing's influence on Washington's policy extends beyond its military strength. As part of efforts by Washington and its allies to alter Beijing's strategic perspective on North Korea, BMD deployments may have an impact. Chinese media prominently featured Patriot deployments in their coverage of the April 2012 launch. The implicit message of these reports suggests that North Korea's activities on the Peninsula are encouraging and facilitating military developments in Asia that are not in China's interest (Lovelace, 2017).

In contrast to China's stance, Japan views North Korean nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and potential United States military action on the Korean Peninsula as direct, credible threats. Since 1958, Japan has maintained that its constitution permits the possession of nuclear weapons solely for self-defence. However, Japan has implemented self-imposed restrictions on its nuclear policy (Hughes, 2007), including the Atomic Energy Basic Law of 1953, which limits nuclear research, and the introduction of the three non-nuclear principles (non-possession, non-production, and non-introduction) in 1967, followed by the four nuclear principles in 1968 (Akaha, 1984). Despite these constraints, Japanese policymakers have periodically reconsidered

the option of developing an indigenous nuclear capability.

The second North Korean nuclear crisis has reignited discussions about Japan's nuclear options. For Japanese policymakers, North Korea's provocative demonstrations of nuclear capability have heightened the existential threat to Tokyo. A longstanding concern is that North Korea might combine miniaturised nuclear weapons with its ballistic missile programme to create a nuclear deterrent capable of reaching Japan (Hughes, 1996). Although incentive-based policies could benefit Tokyo, Japan is unlikely to trust North Korea's compliance due to past experiences involving drug trafficking, admitted kidnappings, threats to destroy Tokyo, and missile launches over Japanese territory. Nevertheless, Japan has alternative means to deter and defend against North Korea. Japan's primary response to North Korean missile and nuclear threats has been to accelerate the introduction of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems (Kasokurun, 2006).

Historically, there has been minimal public support for altering Japan's "peace constitution". However, in April 2003, the Japanese Defence Agency (JDA) revised its policy from "possessing the minimum defence capability necessary for an independent country" to "coping with new threats" (Orcutt, 2004). Following the 1998 Taepo Dong launch, Japan launched two spy satellites in March 2003 to reduce reliance on American intelligence sources. Additional military defence measures include increased support for America's missile defence, consideration of new PAC-3 missile systems to protect critical infrastructure, and installation of ship-based missile defence systems on Aegis-class destroyers (Orcutt, 2004). Japanese policymakers have even discussed acquiring Tomahawk Cruise Missiles as a relatively inexpensive

conventional deterrent against North Korea, although this capability might conflict with Japan's self-imposed prohibition on offensive weaponry (Hughes, 2007).

Beyond military posture changes, Japan has withheld humanitarian assistance to North Korea during the current crisis. Japanese policymakers have also begun considering policy options should incentive-based diplomacy fail. For instance, during the 1994 crisis, Japan estimated it could potentially reduce the approximately \$600 million annual flow into North Korea from Korean sympathisers residing in Japan (Orcutt, 2004). While Japan would be the only regional partner not to oppose military force, it is not eager to consider its use. Japan, within range of North Korean ballistic missiles and potential clandestine special-forces insertions, is a likely target in any North Korean attempt to divide the United States-Japanese alliance. Based on decades of mistrust and disputes, including Japan's colonisation of Korea and North Korea's kidnappings, drug trafficking, and naval skirmishes, Japan anticipates a strike by North Korea. The debate centres on the nature and severity of potential damage. Although some argue that a United States military build-up could boost Japan's economy, a major war on the Korean Peninsula would have disastrous effects on regional economies (Orcutt, 2004).

South Korea, like Japan, has a history of considering nuclear weapons acquisition due to its geographical situation and concerns about potential United States alliance abandonment. South Korea faces the most imminent existential threat from North Korea's nuclear weapons development (Hughes, 2007). Seoul has demonstrated its ability to progress towards the first tier of nuclear proliferators in Northeast Asia by attempting to acquire nuclear weapons. The phrase, "The road from Washington to

Pyongyang must pass through Seoul," (Berry, 1995) highlights the delicate position of the America-North Korea alliance. Despite North Korea's history of aggression against South Korea, Seoul does not appear to believe that North Korea will employ nuclear weapons against it. However, in the current military tension between North and South Korea, North Korea has conducted military drills showcasing its capabilities in response to similar displays by the United States in the region, as explained by Sanubi's (2012) inside-out policy concept.

Similar to China's reaction, an incentive-based approach aligns with South Korea's Sunshine Policy of engagement through dialogue and exchanges (Han, 2002). Although difficult for American diplomats to comprehend given past violence, many South Koreans feel a kinship with North Korea and view the United States as the primary obstacle to peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the true target of North Korean nuclear weapons (Orcutt, 2004). President Roh's inexperience in national politics and international crises was evident at the outset of his administration. His comments perceived as overly supportive of the United States' hard-line approach towards North Korea met with domestic resistance. Eventually, Roh's administration adopted a policy of not tolerating North Korean nuclear weapons while seeking peaceful resolution. He appeared reluctant to consider alternative measures should diplomacy fail, referring to the situation as an issue rather than a crisis (Vyas, Chen, and Roy, 2015). This unwillingness to consider full military action against North Korea negatively impacted perceptions of the Washington-Pyongyang alliance, limited the potential for successful coercive diplomacy, and could further hinder potential military operations by denying United States forces the ability to operate from South Korean territory.

South Korea has expressed strong opposition to even contemplating military action to disarm a nuclear-armed North Korea. The younger generation in South Korea not only perceives the United States as a barrier to reunification and the primary target of North Korean hostility, but also comprehends the catastrophic consequences a peninsula-wide conflict would entail (Orcutt, 2004). The concept of South Korea as "the hub of Northeast Asia" becomes challenging to promote internationally if the entire peninsula is engulfed in warfare. Furthermore, such a conflict would obliterate South Korea's aspirations of becoming a top-tier economic power (Orcutt, 2004). Both China and South Korea, advocates of an incentive-based policy approach, are reluctant to support coercive measures and explicitly oppose any discourse regarding military intervention. Japan, whilst preferring an incentive-based strategy, shares the perspective of many American diplomats that the prospects for success are limited.

Taiwan emerges as the third potential candidate that might pursue nuclear capabilities in response to North Korea's nuclear programme. This consideration stems from the potential upgrade of China's nuclear arsenal, which could occur in reaction to a more heavily armed Japan, either conventionally or nuclear-equipped, which in turn would be a response to North Korean provocations (Hughes, 2007). Alternatively, Taiwan might be motivated to acquire nuclear weapons due to the general weakening of international non-proliferation regimes brought about by North Korean actions (Mitchell, 2004). Singapore, which previously permitted visa-free travel for North Koreans, has now implemented a visa requirement system.

As tensions escalate on the Korean Peninsula, African nations face mounting pressure from American-led United Nations initiatives to

sever ties with North Korea. Diplomatic and bilateral relations between North Korea and Africa can be traced back to the Cold War era, with North Korea providing substantial financial and military support for independence movements. Security and military links between North Korea and Africa, primarily centred on armaments, technological training, and maintenance, persist to this day despite UN sanctions, thereby increasing the proliferation of light arms and weapons and the risk of these weapons falling into terrorist hands (Harris, 2018). Using private companies and embassies as fronts, North Korea has sold arms and offered security and military training to Tanzania, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mozambique, Namibia, Benin, Botswana, Mali, and Zimbabwe.

United Nations sanctions, primarily comprising trade and arms embargoes, have aimed to exert economic pressure on North Korea to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding its nuclear weapons proliferation programme. Despite the increasing scope and intensity of sanctions over the decades, they have not achieved the expected success in crippling North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. Notwithstanding ongoing United Nations investigations into potential sanctions violations by certain African countries (Angola, Uganda, DR Congo, Eritrea, Mozambique, Tanzania and Namibia), only fifteen percent of African UN member states have fully complied with reporting requirements (Salem, 2017).

In response to UN accusations of sanctions violations, Namibia pledged to terminate its commercial relations with North Korea, whilst Uganda immediately severed its military ties. Japan has recently frozen Namibian assets for continuing business dealings with North Korea. Despite the significant lack of efficient enforcement

procedures, sanctions can only thrive through economic isolationism and political pressure. However, due to Pyongyang's long history of bilateral, multilateral, and trilateral engagements on the African continent, coupled with the deficiency in traditional United States leadership in the region, sanctions have not proven sufficiently effective in isolating Pyongyang from this part of the world. The inherent weaknesses of the sanction's regime and the inadequacy of political incentives to match enforcement have led African countries to play a prominent role in providing North Korea with much-needed avenues for engagement.

To counter this trend, the United Nations and United States are devising strategies to offer compelling incentives for African nations to fully implement sanctions, particularly by reducing their continued dependence on North Korea and demonstrating America's commitment to the continent's future. The United States' campaign has achieved some breakthroughs. Uganda has rejected all military relations and offers from North Korea, including those from high-level arms dealers, to fully comply with UN sanctions. South Africa, maintaining a firm international stance against nuclear proliferation, has been sharply critical of North Korea's continued nuclear detonations and ballistic missile tests in violation of UN prohibitions. South Africa currently lacks a diplomatic mission in North Korea, with its embassy to North Korea located in Beijing. Angola has suspended all commercial trade with North Korea, banning North Korean companies from operating within its borders since the United Nations tightened sanctions. (Dagyum, 2025).

Australia has maintained a more autonomous approach in its interactions with Asia, driven by its clear self-interest in the Korean Peninsula. This is evidenced by Australia's swift re-establishment of diplomatic relations

and subsequent bilateral ties with North Korea, as well as its current pursuit of a rapid and idealistic resolution to the crisis in the region. The implications of the Peninsula's tensions for Australia are primarily centred on its significant economic relationships within Northeast Asia. Despite recent declines in growth trends, Australia continues to regard this region as its most crucial export market. In 2001, it accounted for 40.7 per cent of Australia's merchandise exports. Any disruption to the region, affecting either Australian trade or intra-regional commerce, will inevitably impact Australia's economic interests (Robertson, 2003).

As noted in Hong (2003), Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, responding to a Parliamentary question on 13 February 2003, emphasised:

"It is not unreasonable for the United States to talk with the North Koreans and see what can be achieved. Therefore, we are optimistic that over time and most importantly, under appropriate conditions and circumstances, these type of bilateral negotiations will take place" (Hong, 2003).

The Australian government's position on nuclear policy remains consistent, focusing on exerting diplomatic pressure on North Korea to resume compliance with its Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations. Australia's stance advocates for all forms of multilateral, bilateral, and regional dialogues and negotiations (Robertson, 2003).

Poland, which previously hosted up to eight hundred North Korean workers, has ceased renewing visas, as has Malta. Travel restrictions have also intensified, with Ukraine revoking a Soviet-era agreement that

permitted visa-free visits for North Koreans. Russia, on the other hand, has experienced a diminishment of its once-strong political influence over North Korea, and its Far East region is suffering significant economic repercussions due to the loss of a substantial labour force for its construction sector. In 2017, the number of North Korean citizens working in Russia decreased from thirty-four thousand to eleven thousand by the end of 2018 (Barannikova, 2019). More concerning is that prior to the passage and subsequent adoption of the last resolution, the number of North Korean workers in Russia's Far East was fourteen thousand, but has now reduced to less than three thousand. This has also affected the trilateral economic cooperation between Russia, North Korea, and South Korea, known as the Trans-Korean project. This trilateral cooperation cannot be fully implemented under the current stringent sanction's regime (Barannikova, 2019).

Ukraine inherited nuclear weapons on its territory following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, but it took three years of negotiations before the government agreed to return the weapons to Russia. In light of Russia's revisionist removal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine, Kyiv now regrets relinquishing that capability. This underscores the motivation behind nations with nuclear weapons capability striving to retain their arsenals. Portugal has confirmed the severance of diplomatic ties with North Korea, aligning with heightened international efforts to compel North Korea to halt its nuclear and missile provocations, in accordance with the international community's attempts to curb North Korea's hostile actions (Won, 2017).

As the United States-led United Nations endeavours to prevent North Korea from achieving a credible nuclear deterrent, America is employing all available tools and a campaign to isolate North Korea. This

includes pressuring trade partners worldwide to cease all business dealings with North Korea and to impose a moratorium on diplomatic relations with the government. The United States' demands in Latin America have met with mixed reactions. While most nations in the continent have severed diplomatic and bilateral ties with North Korea, some have expressed indifference to assisting in exerting additional pressure on North Korea (Stratfor, 2017.).

For Brazil, the only country in the Americas with embassies in both Korean nations, neutrality is a crucial foreign policy concept. In its relations with other countries, Brazil aims to maintain open dialogue and neutrality in conflicts involving third parties. Thus, whilst Brazil's foreign ministry promptly issued a statement condemning North Korea's September 3 nuclear test, it simultaneously asserted that the situation on the Korean Peninsula could only be resolved through dialogue. Brazil announced the severance of trade ties with North Korea but has not closed its embassy, which former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva inaugurated in Pyongyang in 2009 (Stratfor, n.d.).

Similar to Brazil, Chile is working to preserve all bilateral ties with North Korea. The actual volume of total trade between them is difficult to quantify. This is because some South Korean imports originating from the Kaesong industrial complex, a joint Korean economic zone within North Korea, could be reported by Chilean officials as coming from North Korea. The same ambiguous accounting may apply to Chile's exports to North Korea. Beyond economics, China's influence plays a significant role in Chilean policy decisions (Lee, 2024).

Venezuela and Cuba belong to a distinct group of Latin American nations. They share ideological and security connections with

North Korea and currently experience strained relations with Washington. These countries exhibit little inclination to terminate diplomatic ties with North Korea. In recent months, Venezuelan government officials have faced increased sanctions from America, while relations between America and Cuba have grown increasingly tense. The North Korean nuclear weapons issue extends beyond mere possession of deliverable nuclear and ballistic weapons; the current concern is how North Korea intends to deploy them, whilst considering the international community's stance on nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, and the taboo on nuclear use. This has consequently led to a more precarious situation for potential proliferators. Iran serves as the primary example, as its nuclear weapon aspirations are partially linked to establishing a credible deterrent against the regional nuclear capabilities of the United States of America and Israel (Obama, 2017).

A significant concern regarding Iranian nuclear arms proliferation is that its nuclear weapons ambitions may encourage neighbouring countries to acquire nuclear weapons. The primary candidates are Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. For Saudi Arabia, this has progressed beyond mere rhetoric or speculation; the Saudi government has openly declared its intention to develop its nuclear deterrent if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia is currently investing in both nuclear weapons technology and the necessary human capital to advance the project to a deliverable status. To substantiate its threat, it has already entered into a civilian nuclear energy agreement with the United States of America and has consented to purchase reactors that could serve as a source for future plutonium reprocessing (Arshad, 2024).

Turkey, nominally an ally of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and

the United States of America, has diminishing trust in the United States of America and NATO (whose extended deterrence theoretically provided Turkey with reasons not to develop nuclear weapons). Turkey also has a nuclear power agreement with Russia, indicating its willingness to opportunistically find partners for its nuclear activities (Bugos, 2019). Moreover, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has criticised nuclear-armed nations for maintaining an unacceptable monopoly on nuclear weapons and has suggested that his nation will acquire its own nuclear arsenal (Bugos, 2019). Egypt presents a lower proliferation threat; however, given the regional balance-of-power dynamics associated with a nuclear Iran and Saudi Arabia, and considering recent events in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, Egypt would likely reconsider nuclear armament. They already possess some nuclear expertise from a previously abandoned nuclear weapon programme. Kuwait has announced it will cease issuing visas to North Korean guest workers and will demand that the country reduce staff at its embassy in Kuwait city (power-technology.com, 2023).

North Korea continues to pose an increasing threat to global security. In addition to sanctions in the Security Council, the United States and Japan, along with South Korea, are exploring unilateral as well as bilateral and trilateral cooperation. Many countries allied with South Korea are implementing their own measures in response to North Korea's nuclear test of September 2016. Furthermore, due to the ties between Pyongyang and Beijing, certain actions could severely strain numerous international relations with China. On a global level, the international community is recognised as having limited options for addressing the situation in North Korea (Boydston, 2017). For instance, employing economic threats to dissuade

North Korea from pursuing its foreign policy is not a viable option, particularly given that it is already subject to the strictest sanctions in history. A significant aspect of Donald Trump's strategy of "maximum pressure and engagement" towards North Korea has been to completely isolate North Korea from the international scene. This effort appears to have been successful. It has been observed that numerous nations have expelled their respective North Korean diplomatic teams, severed diplomatic ties, and terminated other bilateral engagements and trade in recent months (Boydston, 2017).

Conclusion

The major aim of the paper was to interrogate the impact of North Korean nuclear weapon programmes on global security. Evident in the paper, North Korea's nuclear weapon activities remain one of the most pressing threats to global security. Despite several economic sanctions and diplomatic efforts, the regime has continued to advance its nuclear capabilities, posing serious threats to global security. North Korea's commitment to nuclear weapon programmes as a strategy for deterrence and regime survival further threatens global security. Thus, an urgent solution is needed

Recommendations

Based on data presented and analyzed, the paper recommends that;

- i. The International Community should strengthen targeted sanctions against North Korean nuclear weapons activities while avoiding humanitarian impacts on North Korean citizens.
- ii. The United Nations should strengthen its international monitoring mechanisms to

prevent North Korea from exporting nuclear weapons to other countries or non-state actors.

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