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The DPRK Nuclear Programme as a Tool of Foreign and Security Policy¹

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Abstract: Since the early 1990s, the security situation of Korean peninsula has been defined mainly by the development of the nuclear and missile programme by North Korea – DPRK. The end of the Cold War changed the security situation of North Korea. With the dissolution of the Socialist bloc, the country lost legitimacy, mainly externally, and its political leadership decided to pursue the militarization of its nuclear programme. The development of the nuclear programme has undergone several phases and experienced a significant boost since the third leader, Kim Jong-un, took power in 2011. The country has tested new types of nuclear devices as well as missiles. These actions did not go unanswered and today, North Korea is facing severe UN sanctions as well as unilateral sanctions by many countries. The aim of the study is to show how North Korea instrumentalises its nuclear and missile programme for different political purposes. Externally they provide for the regime's security through the deterrence strategy and at the same time they are used as a bargaining chip in negotiations, mainly with the U.S. Internally, the programmes serve as a sign of the young leader's ability to guarantee security and independence for the country. The study builds on theoretical concepts that explain why states seek to build nuclear weapons. Two dominant reasons are identified: security reasons and prestige represent one and character of political regime and legitimacy represent the second reason. The study specifically analyses the behaviour of North Korea in the recent crisis which started in 2017. The crisis was followed by a diplomatic charm offensive initiated by the North Korean leader. The study concludes that the North Korean political elite is using its nuclear and missile programmes successfully to achieve its goals, even though sometimes the success is just partial.

Keywords: North Korea, nuclear program, missile crisis, diplomacy, Kim Jong-un, nuclear deterrence, compellence

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1. Introduction

The political and security development of Korean peninsula has been changing since the end of Cold War. Recent, most significant change took place in last 3 years. While the year 2017 could be characterized as a year of crisis and permanent threat of the use of force, the 2018 was a year of booming diplomacy and several summit meetings. At the start of 2019, we saw efforts to continue with diplomacy and negotiations, however towards the end of the year the situation reached a stalemate. Nevertheless, the situation on Korean Peninsula is far from being stable, North Korea is a nuclear state and nothing suggests that it is ready to give up its program and status assigned to it. The main reason is that North Korean elite sees the international relations through the lenses of realist theory of international relations. Especially since the end of Cold War North Korean politicians are aware of their sensitivity and vulnerability vis-à-vis the U.S., dominant actor in international relations. The North Korean perception of international relations is based on several factors. Firstly, historical experiences, going back to when first state-like formation appeared on Korean peninsula which has a strategic position in Northeast Asia.

More recently experiences of 20th Century when powers have decided³ about Korean people without their presence, plays a significant role. It causes a deep mistrust of North Korean political elite not only towards particular states, but also towards international agreements and law in general. Second factor concerns its own security perception. While the existence of Soviet bloc provided for legitimacy of North Korean regime and state, in current international environment the regime searches for other tools. The totalitarian character of political system based on strong personality cult supported by ideology, racial nationalism, militarization and strong control over population, represent pillars of political stability. In North Korean identity narrative and the security of Korean people is achievable only through strong and decisive leadership of Kim family. This different, even opposite character of political system in comparison to political system of the U.S., is another source of mistrust and threat perception. Especially as the U.S. have been engaged in a policy of regime change in countries with different political systems.

In the situation as North Korean leaders saw it, especially since the end of Cold War orientation to nuclear program was a rational decision. From the beginning it was seen mainly as a strong deterrent against any possible hostile activity from the U.S. However,

³ The lack of trust towards powers has its roots in the events of late 19th Century and early 20th Century when two wars were fought over Korean peninsula. Both were won by Japan and led to Japanese colonization. After Japanese empire was defeated two another powers, this time U.S. and USSR agreed on the division of peninsula. Over the second half of 20th Century the two powerful allies North Korea had, did not prove to be reliable when their own interest and relations, especially with the U.S. were at stake.

it soon proved to have another value, as a strong bargaining chip thanks to which North Korea often manage to secure economic and humanitarian aid.

The aim of this study is to show how North Korean uses its nuclear program, on one hand as a nuclear deterrent, on the other as a negotiation tool. At the same time nuclear program servers its domestic purposes while it represents one of the pillars of political system. In order to achieve this aim, the study briefly analyses development of nuclear a missile programs in North Korea, and its negotiation behaviour styles. Specifically, the study focuses on recent development in both areas analysing the events as they took place since the last crisis in 2017.

2. Theoretical background

Nuclear weapons have changed the world, that is the statement many scholars and politicians agree on. With this type of weaponry, the human kind achieved a point when nuclear conflict could lead to the annihilation of all life on the planet. This knowledge significantly changed the way we perceive threats of the use of power, or conflicts as states possessing nuclear weapons can influence everyone with their actions. Even if the nuclear weapons were used against an enemy just once, as Waltz (1993: 53) puts it “nuclear weapons create their own credibility, the mere possibility of nuclear use causes extreme caution.”

Significant research has been done on nuclear weapons program from strategic perspective started by Bernard Brodie in the 1940s. The so called Doomsday Clock was created in 1947 showing to people how close is the world to the midnight, symbolizing the annihilation caused by nuclear weapons. Additionally, the whole concept of strategic culture was inspired by the need to answer under which circumstances would Soviet Union decide to use nuclear weapons and how their perception differs from the American one.

At the same time, the vision of nuclear free world has been advocated, leading to the creation of global non-proliferation regime represented by the Non-Proliferation Treaty adopted in 1968 in which nuclear weapons possessing countries (5 at that time) agreed not to proliferate the technology and work together towards the nuclear free world. However, the regime did not prevent other countries to try to and successfully acquire these types of weapons.

The development since the end of Cold War inspired further research addressing not only proliferation issues, but also why some states opt not to take the proliferation direction or why they give up existing potential as was a case in some of former Soviet republics (Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan) and South Africa. Group of reasons have been identified by different authors. Scott Sagan (1996/1997) proposed three models under which states adopt decision to build a nuclear bomb. His first model which he calls

the “security model” is in accordance with a realist view on international relations. Second, or “domestic model” looks at internal decision making of different stakeholders in states that opts for nuclear program development. Third, “norms model” takes into consideration how international norms could influence decision of a state to pursue the nuclear weapons option.

In her book, Etel Solingen (2007) summarizes different theoretical approaches applied when answering the question about proliferation. The first, traditional one is the neorealist perspective claiming states opt for nuclear weapons program from security dilemma or power balancing reasons. Second, based in neoliberalism claims that existing institutions and regime do impact countries decision about nuclear weapons. Third approach uses international norms as argumentation why states do not opt for nuclear weapons program, the issues of morality of that decision place a role. Fourth group is based on democratic theory, predicting a specific behaviour of democratic country and concurrent behaviour for authoritarian regime. Fifth is the domestic model, slightly different from Sagan’s, as in Solingen’s view (2007: 17) it is bound to economic development and relation to global economy.

An interesting addition to the reasoning is provided by Joseph Cirincione (2007: 47) who defines five reasons: security, prestige, domestic politics, technology and economy. The security reason is compatible with the issues of seeing nuclear weapons as security provider. The issue of prestige is related to the symbolism of nuclear weapons and is connected with a desire to become a nuclear power state. In case of domestic politics, different internal groups see the state’s position differently and some, especially military can push for nuclear weapons program. The fourth depend on technological capabilities and scientific development in the country, that leaders can be tempted by. Fifth reason, is not independent on the four previous, as sometimes economic development can incentivise the decision to develop nuclear weapons, or lead the country the non-nuclear direction.

The security reasoning behind the nuclear program development is the most elaborated as the argumentation it uses is based on the realist theory of international relations. This theory assumes that the first and foremost interest of any state is to survive in anarchic, self-help system where alliances are temporary, and trust does not exist as the intentions of states are never clear. Therefore, everyone needs to acquire power in order to survive. The question how much power state needs opens yet another debate within realist theory but it is not of significant concern for this study. What is important however is the issue of power resources and their combination. It is clear that for different states different resources provide different ends. Ideally a combination of all of them, gives a state a power status. In this regards, nuclear weapons have created a new category of states, those possessing nuclear weapons, the nuclear powers. Reason why states decides to acquire nuclear weapons from realist perspective is therefore rational.

When looking at nuclear weapons and their use from military and strategic perspective, the focus of the research was the issue of nuclear deterrence. Originally to deter was understood as to prevent or discourage someone from action, through fear. As Waltz (1990: 732) puts it “deterrence in pure form entails no ability to defend, deterrence strategy is not to fend off aggressor but to damage and destroy what he holds dear.” In connection to nuclear weapons, deterrence is understood in sense of what a state can do, not necessarily what state will do. Therefore, the existence of nuclear weapons, not necessarily their use proves to be a significant factor in the nuclear deterrence strategy. As deterrence in nuclear age “rests on the threat of pain and extinction, not just on threat of military defeat” (Schelling 2008: 23). This was specifically valid during the Cold War period and was of significant importance in relations between U.S. and USSR.

However, the end of Cold War left the world with one dominating state, the U.S. with unbalanced and unchecked power. After over 30 years of unipolarity we can conclude, that the foreign policy of U.S., military actions conducted all around the world, did not make world a safer place. Especially for those who oppose the U.S. dominance or foreign policy. North Korea is one of these states. Officially categorized as a rogue state, so a state “pursuing own interest through methods that are contrary to accepted standards of international behaviour and international law” (Pillar 2018). Monteiro (2011: 20) terms this type of states a recalcitrant minor power, “state facing lower cost of balancing *the unipole* relative to bandwagoning”. From his perspective, these minor powers can opt for a development of nuclear program to be able to deter the system dominant power. In addition, an especially in relation to North Korea, when a dominant actor, identifies an “axis of evil” consisting of 3 states and starts an invasion against one of them the need to prevent similar happening even increases. As Waltz (2011) concludes, North Korea did exactly that, it has managed to acquire a tool that it believes would deter the U.S. from an attack.

However, the security reasoning and deterrence strategy are not universal and cannot be applied to all countries. The neorealist logic would suggest that nuclear weapons acquired by one of the countries in Northeast Asia would lead to nuclear armament in the region. This argument has been used over 1990s as one of the motivation why North Korean ambitions needed to be stopped by politicians, representatives of international institutions as well as scholars. Since 2006 when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test we did not see indication that the other countries, especially Japan or South Korea would opt for nuclear balancing strategy. In their case some of the above mentioned factor has dominated over the zero-sum neo-realist assumptions – norms and economy being the most dominating.

Even if the security reasoning could clearly be identified in North Korean behaviour and decision to develop nuclear weapons, some of the other reasons did also

play a role.⁴ Mainly the domestic model in combination with technological capabilities and separately the prestige reasons, external as well as internal.

When looking at the domestic model, even if North Korea adopted principles of monolithic leadership, where leader is the most important decision maker, there are factions and interest groups that have an influence within the leadership. In the past the Kim Il-sung's guerrilla fighters had important position in political elite. During Kim Jong-il's rule the military was dominating North Korean politics through the *songun* (military-first) policy. It is possible that the nuclear development was advocated by military representatives, as they were aware of strategic advantage it can bring to the country (Oh and Hassing 2000). Military preserved important position in first years of Kim Jong-un's rule, especially since *byungjin* principle was introduced – as parallel development of nuclear program and economy. However, the influence of military has been balanced by Korean Worker's Party apparatus as the current leader took power. In this regard, the nuclear program was used by Kim Jong-un internally, to show the military his support and their importance, as well as to show the public his ability to lead and provide for security and independence are part of North Korean ruling ideology. In this way, the development and achievements in nuclear program, addressed in next chapter, are matter of prestige for the leader.

The issue of prestige in relation to external players could be seen through the negotiation behaviour of North Korea, as the nuclear program has been used as a bargaining chip during talks with all regional players, most recently in the diplomatic activities that started in 2018. North Korea clearly used the program in what we can call the compellence strategy. The issues of compellence was discussed by Schelling (2008) already in first edition of his book in 1966. The logic is summarized by Sechser and Fuhrmann (2003: 174) as they state that nuclear state can "intimidate opponents into submitting to its demands." Schelling's (2008: 72) definition of compellence provides an interesting theoretical background for North Korea behaviour. He defines it as "initiating an action (or an irrevocable commitment to action) that can cease or become harmless only if the opponent responds." In addition, compellence usually involves a time frame, and general instruction concerning where, what and how much. "Compellent advance has to be projected as to destination and the destination can be unclear in intent as well as momentum and braking power" (Schelling 2008: 73). In general, compellence as a strategy would be use in order to achieve some type of beneficial outcome. For North Korea the beneficial outcome always was any form of international aid, different investment projects related to its promise to freeze the development and in last 3 years its demanded partial lifting of international sanctions, especially those adopted over the

⁴ There has been many publication of North Korean nuclear strategy published over the years, e.g.: Cha (2012), Bechtol (2014), Oh and Hassig (2000).

course of 2017. What needs to be added is that this strategy was not applied only vis-à-vis the actors considered adversary by North Korean elite, but also towards perceived partners – China and Russia – who do not wish for any type of conflict at their border. After the summits in 2018 and 2019 both countries adjusted their implementation of international sanctions and the trading was renewed to certain extent. Naturally, this was not a sole result of North Korean compellence strategy, as both countries followed their own interests.

The reasoning behind nuclear weapons development in North Korea is approached in this study while looking at the development in last seven years, since the country declared itself a nuclear power. The issues of security, prestige and domestic politics are taken into consideration in the following chapters in rather conditional reasoning.

3. North Korean nuclear program

North Korea, officially Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is interesting and rather unique actor in international relations. When looking at it through perspective of power resources and their combination, North Korea could be categorized as a major power.⁵ Geographical position of DPRK, so as its Southern neighbour, is important. Korean peninsula lays in the heart of Northeast Asia and neighbours two nuclear powers – China and Russia, and descending economic power – Japan. In addition, due to the military presence of the U.S. and security alliances established with Japan and South Korea, the United States is a player with interests and influence in the region. This strategic position has formed security situation and development of Korean peninsula since first state-like units were created in the region. Regarding North Korea, especially since the end of Cold War this position is perceived by its elites rather sensitively, especially vis-à-vis the U.S. When it comes to the size of territory and natural resources as well as population, North Korea fits the criteria of middle sized country. However, economic performance and non-participation on the global economic processes would place her among underdeveloped countries. Although, its size of military, with 1 million people in active duty would place her on the hierarchical scale of states closer to, great powers.

In addition, North Korea is today an internationally unrecognized and unilaterally declared nuclear power. The country's leadership has declared this status in April 2013 by adoption of the so called *April 1st Nuclearization Law*. The provisions of the law explain

⁵ Definition provided by Monteiro (2014: 46) is used: "major powers are states lacking the power-projections capabilities necessary to condition the outcome of politico-military operations beyond own region, nonetheless possess sufficient defensive capabilities to inflict heavy costs on any state that decides to attack them."

the nature of nuclear weapons as a tool for defence under the pressure from the threat represented by the U.S. The main aim of these weapons is to deter and repel any attack, and retaliate if attacked, until the time the world denuclearizes. The decisions about nuclear attack are assigned to the supreme leader of Korean People's Army, who is Kim Jong-un. The law further declares that nuclear weapons will not be used against non-nuclear state if this state does not support nuclear state attacking North Korea. For future development the law envisions steps to be taken to bolster deterrence and retaliatory capabilities in quantity as well as quality and additionally an adoption of safety management and mechanisms of handling with the weapons, and also while testing. In addition, a security mechanism should be created to prevent mishandling and proliferation. In final articles North Korea presents itself as a responsible nuclear power ready to participate on international efforts of non-proliferation and minimalization of situations that could lead to a nuclear war (Cheon 2013). The law shows, that North Korean political elite takes its acquired status seriously and its ready to further develop its capabilities in case the threat of an attack remains unchanged. Additionally, declaring itself to behave responsibly vis-à-vis existing non-proliferation regime, nothing shows a willingness to denuclearize, at least to the moment the whole world denuclearizes.

When looking not only at the provisions of Nuclearization law, but on the overall situation North Korean political elite has found itself after Cold War, development of nuclear program was a rational decision. This rationality, from North Korean perspective, is based on the status of relations between the USSR and U.S. during the Cold War period, when the nuclear deterrence worked absolutely. Additionally, looking at developments in Iraq, Libya and also Syria, all countries that were considered once as those who will be interested in nuclear program development, North Korean politicians have learned a lesson. All these countries were suspected of having nuclear program, never officially declaring it, and they all found themselves in a conflict with the U.S. or its allies.

Chronological development of the North Korean nuclear program shows, that specifically the invasion to Iraq in 2003 could have been one of the facilitators. (Waltz 2011; Ford and Kwon 2008) Until early 2000s, North Korean nuclear program evolved gradually. North Korean started with development of its nuclear program as early as late 1950s. In this period, it had a latent form when students of nuclear physics were sent into fraternal countries to study their experiences. These countries were not only USSR, but also Hungary or Czechoslovakia. The phase of constructing nuclear facilities in Yongbyon started as of early 1960s with research reactors being built in first phase. Experiments with nuclear fission reaction started shortly afterwards. In the 1970s North Korea has requested assistance from China and Russia in acquiring nuclear weapons, but that was denied. Only between 1984 and 1986 a 5MWe graphite reactor is completed in Yongbyon, it was later upgraded to 8MWe. Although, in 1985 North Korea has signed the NPT, but refused to signed the Safeguard Agreement that allows for inspections. That was only

signed in 1992 after US withdrawn their nuclear capabilities from South Korea (Wit, Poneman and Galluci 2004).

During the 1990s the development in North Korea has been impacted by the dissolution of USSR, first nuclear inspections of its facilities, announced withdrawal from NPT that has been taken back due to the start of direct negotiations between representatives of DPRK and the US. These negotiations led to signing of the Agreed Framework⁶ in 1994, that was considered a baseline for US-DPRK bilateral relations up until 2002. After the agreement was signed mutual relations continued in rather positive environment leading to the visit of serving U.S. Secretary of State M. Albright to Pyongyang in 1999. Possibility of summit between president Clinton and Kim Jong-il was discussed.

However, the upcoming events change the course of bilateral relations as well as pace of development of nuclear program. In 2001 new U.S. president, G. W. Bush was sworn in. Terrorist attacks on 9/11 change the way the U.S. conducted their foreign policy. In January 2002 president Bush in his State of the Union Address placed DPRK together with Iraq and Iran on the “axis of evil” and in March 2003 U.S. invasion to Iraq started. At the same time DPRK withdraw from NPT and expelled IAEA nuclear inspectors. In 2005 DPRK confirmed, through the Press release of its Foreign Ministry existence of uranium enrichment program, and in October 2006 it conducted first nuclear test.

The logic of nuclear program as a provider of security for the regime was stressed regularly. In addition, its compellence function was confirmed when the U.S. agreed to a bilateral meeting few weeks later. Until October 2006 the U.S. administration refused to meet with North Korean representatives in any other platform than the one provided by the Six Party Talks.⁷ In late October 2006 U.S. North Korean nuclear negotiator Christopher Hill met with vice-minister of foreign affairs Kim Gye-gwan in Beijing and later in Berlin. The U.S. representative has reportedly agreed to discuss the issue of frozen funds at the accounts in Banco Delta Asia, while North Korea agreed to return to, that time stalled, Six Party Talk process (Prichard 2007). The second test of May 2009 was conducted just few months after new U.S. president B. Obama was sworn in. It could have been interpreted as a way to remind to the administration the existence of North Korean

⁶ The Agreed Framework led to the sealing of North Korean nuclear facility in Yongbyon under supervision of IAEA. As an energy loss compensation, oil shipments were provided to North Korea from the U.S., South Korea, China, Japan and other countries. In addition, a Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was created to build two light water nuclear reactors (State Department 1994).

⁷ Six Party Talks were a mechanism of multilateral negotiations involving DPRK, U.S., South Korea, Japan, Russia and China. They took place from August 2003 to December 2008 in Beijing. The aim of these negotiation was the so called CVID – complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization. Two documents signed at these negotiations are considered significant: September 2005 Joint statement and February 2007 Denuclearization Action Plan. In these North Korea agreed to denuclearize and U.S. have declared no intentions to attack North Korea and compensate for energy losses with crude oil shipments.

nuclear program. However, in this period the nuclear program acquired an important domestic feature as a second transfer of leadership started in North Korea.

The nuclear program progressed to next phase after February 2013 test and the mentioned Nuclearization Law. It was perceived as a confirmation of strong position of new leader internally but also externally. The test was a blow for Obama administration that has negotiated the so called Leap Day Agreement⁸ in 2012. Further testing started only in 2016 with two tests conducted over the course of the year, with blasts of both stronger than in all previous cases. North Korean media claimed that they have tested hydrogen bomb, which would suggest further progress of nuclear program. At the same time the tests have confirmed the self-declared nuclear status of the country (O'Neil 2016; Hecker 2016; Rauf 2016). The last test until today (April 2020) was conducted in September 2017. The test came amid crisis that has been evolving over the course of the year between DPRK and new U.S. administration of president Trump. As unpredictable as the U.S. administration proved to be, president himself talked about "big armada" being send to the proximity of peninsula (Trump 2017a). The possibility of war, potentially nuclear, was discussed not only among politicians but also scholars. Although, the exchange of threats and pejorative manes was replaced by diplomacy, courtship and summit meetings in 2018 and 2019.

Over the period of development of its nuclear program North Korea confirmed its multiple purpose. Externally, it is seen as a tool of deterrence on one hand, especially against the U.S. activities. On the other hand, it proved to be a useful negotiation tool. Even though the country did not achieve everything it has intended, the fact that the U.S. president has met with Kim Jong-un provided for legitimacy to the leader. From North Korean perspective it proved that the possession of nuclear weapons opens door to direct talks with great powers. Internally, especially since the leadership transition the nuclear program became an important legitimacy tool for current leader.

When looking at how and why North Korea decided to develop its nuclear program, short analysis of its missile program must follow, as it represents its integral part. Without developed intercontinental ballistic missiles able to reach the U.S. territory the overall deterrence aspect of nuclear weapons would not be complete. Therefore, we will briefly address the issues of missile program and its recent development before we move to the domestic connotation of the nuclear program.

⁸ The agreement came at the end of lasting process of negotiations. The U.S. have agreed to provide food aid in exchange for moratorium on uranium enrichment program and tests of missiles.

3.1. Missile Program

Even if the nuclear program is the one more protracted in a media as well as international negotiations, the missile program is its integral part. In order to make the nuclear deterrence to work and represent a potential threat for the U.S. development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) is vital. Comments of president Trump addressing renewed tests of short and medium range missiles as “standard” partially confirm this assumption (Sanger and Broad 2019).

As most of North Korean industries, the missile program has its origin in cooperation with USSR and China in 1960s, development of ballistic missiles started in 1970s. North Korea has started early with adjustments of missile provided by its allies and production of own types modelled after those delivered as part of fraternal cooperation. Over the years it has cooperated with Syria, Iran, Pakistan and Egypt (Bermudez 1999). North Korean has currently several hundreds of missiles with different range to its disposal.

The one stage short range ballistic missiles known as Hwasong-5 and Hwasong-6 with a range of 350 to 500 km are operational since late 1980s and represent a threat mainly for South Korea and U.S. troops deployed on Peninsula. Two-stage medium and range missiles called Nodong-1 with expected range of 1000 to 1500 km could reach Japanese territory and U.S. bases there (Bermudez 1999).

In 1990s North Korea started producing two-stage intermediate range and intercontinental missiles known as Taepodong-1 and Taepodong-2, with estimated range of 1500-2500km for first type and 4000-8000km for the second type. Taepodong-1 was later modified to a three-stage missile that was supposed to be used to place a satellite into orbit. In August 1998 North Korea fired Taepodong-1 SLV in failed attempt to place satellite Kwangmyongsong 1 to the orbit. This attempt failed, however the third stage of the missile overflowed Japanese islands and put Japanese forces on high alert.

The test was followed by so called missile talks with the representatives of the U.S. which led to missile test moratorium. That ended when in summer 2006 North Korea test fired Taepodong-2 intercontinental ballistic missile with believed range up to 8000km. This test failed and next came only in April 2009 when the missile reached 3 800km distance. The next test took place in April 2012, when missile under designation Unha-3 was tested. Unha missile type are believed to be the same or slightly modified versions of Taepodong-2 missiles (CSIS 2020).

The significant period of North Korean missile testing came in 2016 and 2017 when several tests were conducted. In 2016 new missiles marked Musudan with expected range of 2 500 to 4000km was tested. Another type of tested missiles was the submarine launched ballistic missile Pukkuksong-1 (KN-11) with expected range of 1 200km. As of February 2017 several tests took place, missile Pukkuksong-2 (KN-15), with expected range of 2 000km, a Scud type missile KN-17 was tested, believed to be an Anti-Ship

Missile. (Panda 2017) In addition, mediate range ballistic missile Hwasong-12 with expected range of 4 000km was tested in April, May, August and September. As the year has progressed the DPRK has started with tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles, the Hwasong-14 (KN-20) could have a range of 10 000km. During its first test the missile flew for 2 800km and during second almost 3 700km (Schilling 2017a, 2017b). For now, the last test of ICBM took place in November 2017 when missile Hwasong-15 (KN-22) was tested with expected range of 8 500 to 13 000km.

As mentioned in 2019 North Korea returned to the tests of missiles with sort and medium range. Naturally, the ICBM which could possibly reach U.S. mainland are the most important in the deterrence strategy of North Korea. Basically, the capability to deliver the missiles to enemy's territory is main part of the whole strategy. Even if the complete range was not tested, the progress in testing made over 2016 and 2017 was significant and gave North Korea leader a confidence to declare the program a success. As he said, North Korea "come to possess a powerful and reliable war deterrent" (Kim 2018).

3.2. Internal rational for nuclear program development

As the theoretical approaches mentioned above, one of important reason why state decides for nuclear program could be domestic development. North Korean program does have this domestic dimension, especially since Kim Jong-un was introduced as his father's successor. In 2009 Kim was in his late 20s, with not many experiences from politics and military. As a member of Kim family he was not disputed, however there was certain need to prove his abilities and strength not only in front of people, but mainly before the ruling elite. He was therefore mentioned as a person ordering the March 2010 sinking of South Korean military vessel and fire attack on Yongpyong island in November of the same year. The importance of strong position vis-à-vis military leaders was influenced by the mechanisms of governance introduced by his father Kim Jong-il. Since 1997, Kim Jong-il ruled in accordance with "military first" policy, under which Korean People's Army (KPA) was the most important institution in North Korean political system. Therefore, the first task for Kim Jong-un as successor and later as a new leader was to take control over military. This process was conducted through purges, disappearance and death of people, including family members, seemingly random promotion and demotion of military officers.

Ideologically, Kim Jong-un introduced the so called *byungjin* principle, as a continuation of ideologies created by his grand-father and father. The principle was decoded as a parallel development of economy and nuclear capabilities. While some economic reforms were adopted that have started to change the face of North Korean agriculture, and business environment, the nuclear development gained priority.

What is important to stress in terms of economic reform, the target of these reforms was not necessarily the well-being and improvement of living conditions of

ordinary citizens. The main aim was to fulfil the expectations and needs of members of ruling elite (Cheon 2013). In addition, the government started with large construction projects that should accommodate the activities of growing middle class, water part, ski resorts, new apartment buildings were built and open over the course of last 7 years.

As mentioned the nuclear development leg of byungjin was prioritized, mainly from external reasons, but also internally. All nuclear and missile tests were presented as a result of wise and decisive leadership of Kim Jong-un, with the aim to provide for security to its people. The 7th Congress of KWP that took place in May 2016 introduced North Korean nuclear doctrine, based on three principles. Firstly, North Korea will not use nuclear weapons in conflict as a first from conflicting parties. Secondly, the country is committed to the international efforts to stop proliferation. Thirdly, North Korea is prepared to work on nuclear free world. Additionally, the conclusions of the Congress include terms as nuclear diplomacy suggesting that North Korea presents itself as responsible nuclear power. Although, it is ready to aggressively develop its program if the external environment will remain hostile to it (Kim 2016).

Nuclear program has proved to be an important political tool for North Korean regime whether we look at its external relations or at internal regime stability. The fact that the program has reached its developmental peak in last 4 years suggests how important the nuclear capabilities are for Kim Jong-un's regime. The fact that North Korea declared itself to be a nuclear power suggests that it plans to preserve its nuclear capability. However, as it seems from the development in last 2 years, it is willing to compromise into certain, rather unknown extent.

4. Negotiations strategy and diplomatic charm offensive

As addressed in theoretical part, the nuclear program has not only security reasoning, but it is important for the prestige and status of a country in international relations and vis-à-vis important players. In this regard we have suggested the compellence strategy North Korea has been applying as the nuclear programme proved to be an important negotiating tool. Even before the program reached its current state and North Korea declared itself to be a nuclear power, the negotiating strategy used by state's representatives was tough and hard to predict.

Based on the experiences of inter-Korean negotiations in late 1980s and early 1990s and U.S. – North Korea talks during the first nuclear crisis, there are two strategies North Korean representatives are likely to apply. First is the strategy of warrior or hero, when the negotiators are “aggressive, intransigent, recalcitrant, stubborn, rigid, impolite and undiplomatic” and aim, as in case of military conflict to a victory (Kim 2002: 61; Song 2003). The other strategy is of a shopkeeper, when they behave “open-minded, candid

and compromising” and allows to reach an agreement (Kim 2002: 62; Song 2003). Over the year, the warrior strategy was used more by North Korean representatives.

In general, all phases of negotiations can be complicated by representatives of North Korea. What we have learned from the experience during inter-Korean talks sheds a light on what to expect when engaging with North Korea. The negotiators tend to stall the official meetings due to prolonged pre-negotiations, several time raise and open the same issues and present demands which they know are not negotiable. When meetings are agreed upon and start, they often raise a procedural issues, with an aim to limit negotiation area of its partner to achieve own interests. Their position is always presented as first at negotiation, at least that was the case during inter-Korean negotiations. Stalling tactics as unannounced cancelation of meeting, or bringing new not pre-discussed demands and issues on the table, and also medial attacks against partner are often used (Song 2003). Pressure tactics with setting deadlines, creating crisis or changing pre-negotiated stance are part of the negotiation strategy. When it comes to compromising, it does not come easy from North Korea. In general, they use 3 methods: a quid pro quo, convergence, and documenting only concordant positions (Kim 2002). It is clear that North Korea negotiates in order to achieve beneficial results for itself. The process is long lasting, there are often sudden changes in position, even threats and distractions. The final documents are often rather general, addressing issues where joint position was finally achieved.

When looking at experiences from U.S. – North Korea talks in Geneva in 1993 and 1994 similar patterns of behaviour are observable. However, the style is slightly different as North Korean representatives were aware of the position the U.S. had in international relations. Therefore, North Korea raised high demands at the very beginning of negotiations, they have threatened to worsen the situation in case their demands were not met. Opening statements were aggressive and they demanded setting general principles first, knowing that details are potential sources of conflicts. Over the course of negotiations, they tend to increase their demands, or make problematic another issue if one is sort of settled, often new issues are raised making talks more complex. The stalling tactics and time pressure are applied too over the course of talks, recesses often take place that last not just hours, but days or even weeks. However, when the leaders are ready to make deal, the final phase is fast and negotiator more flexible in formulations of final provisions (Kim 2002).

Over the course of the years the negotiation tactic did not change significantly. However, before and during the first inter-Korean summit new approach was observed. The talks were more active and effective in economic issues, South Korean participants and politicians in general were less attacked face to face or by official media, and less abrupt interruptions appeared (Suh 2003). Although, when looking at the conduct of Six Party Talks from 2003 to 2008, similar a warrior like behaviour could be observed. Strongly presented demands of North Korea, unfriendly rhetoric used by state media

when addressing partners, sudden, months lasting withdrawals from negotiations, strong quid pro quo positions in most of the issues and only partial implementation of agreements.

Naturally, there are examples of civil and effective meetings where one party is North Korea. From Robert Carlin's (2019) personal experience the stance of North Korean representatives changes over the course of negotiations and what was presented as impossible at the start could become possibility. The atmosphere could be even friendly and humorous. The negotiations are always process, especially with North Korean. But experiences suggest that when they want to come to agreement they do that and they are not so aggressive from the start. If the partner comes with preconditions they take them as bullying, and it is not a way to success in talks.

In general, North Korea is not a light negotiation partner, as mentioned they are trying to prevail over their partner, they are not easy to compromise and they definitely are not persuadable to conclusion that they do not foresee before the talks even start. From events that took place in last 3 years it is obvious that some of the strategies used by North Korea were adjusted. At the end, it was thanks to the declared willingness of Kim Jong-un to talk, that the latest round of diplomatic contacts started in 2018. From mentioned patterns of behaviour, he had an aim, when proposing to talk to anyone especially from South Korea, who has Korean national unity and concordance in interest (Kim 2018). The general understanding is, that easing of economic sanctions was the main goal for him. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that his eagerness to receive a recognition of own position from the foreign leaders, did not play a role.

In the next two sub-chapters we will address the meetings between North Korean leader and presidents of four countries as they took place over 2018 and at the beginning of 2019. We believe that the main motivation of Kim Jong-un was not only recognition especially from the U.S. president D. Trump, but also easing economic sanctions and restart in relations mainly with China and Russia.

4.1. Diplomatic activities towards the U.S.

As mentioned above, North Korean leader offered in his 2018 New Year's Adress to talk to anyone who is interested in peaceful development on Korean Peninsula. This offer was answered by South Korean administration. Within few days a delegation led by Minister of Unification Cho Myung-gyon has met with North Korean delegation led by chairman of Committee for peaceful unification Ri Son-gwon. The meeting on January 9th resulted in an agreement regarding sending North Korean sportswomen and sportsmen to the Olympics, accompanied by a cheering squad. In addition, countries have agreed to walked together under one flag at the opening ceremony and to form a joint female ice-hockey team. Moreover, opening ceremony was attended by an official North Korean delegation which included Ms. Kim Yo-jong, sister of Kim Jong-un and that time North Korean

ceremonial head of state Mr. Kim Yong-nam. This delegation has met with South Korean president Moon Jae-in at several occasions, during their last meeting president Moon was handed an invitation for a meeting from Kim Jong-un. He has agreed to such proposal adding that the time needs to be right for another inter-Korean summit (Fifield and Parker 2018).

This development of events was in accordance with South Korean policy towards North Korea. Shortly after president Moon was sworn in, he called for a change in inter-Korean relations and a need to re-establish direct talks between representatives of two Korean states. During his speech in Berlin in July 2017, president Moon address to North Korean leader four very specific proposals. First, was to organize reunion of families separated after the division of peninsula at the occasion of 10th anniversary since the declaration of second inter-Korean summit was signed. Second, he invited North Korean sportswomen and men to participate at the upcoming Winter Olympics, and propose to use them as a platform for peace. Third, he called for ceasing hostilities along DMZ at the occasion of 64th anniversary since the Armistice was achieved. Fourth, he called for dialogue between representatives of both states and offered even summit meeting under right conditions (Moon 2017). Therefore, he reacted promptly to the offer coming from North Korea and South Korean representatives were rather fast to agree with the offer to dispatch the North Korean delegation to the Olympics.

At this stage, North Korean representatives seemed forthcoming in negotiations. During the visit of South Korean delegation in Pyongyang in March, two countries agreed to established direct telephone line between highest representatives of both states. Additionally, Kim Jong-un offered a moratorium on nuclear and missile testing for the period of the negotiations process. What came as a surprise was Kim Jong-un's willingness to meet with U.S. president and discuss the issue of denuclearization (BBC News 2018).

What followed was Donald Trump's acceptance of the proposal to meet, and official visit by Mike Pompeo, that time as a director of CIA, to North Korea where he met leader Kim Jong-un. The meeting took place few days ahead of inter-Korean summit, in late April 2018 and opened a round of talks preparing for meeting between Kim and president Trump. The process of preparation included, besides of preparatory meetings, exchange of letters between two leaders. Despite complication in bilateral relations of both countries, and announcement of president Trump on cancelation of the meeting which was valid for not even two days, the summit eventually took place on June 12, 2018 in Singapore.

The summit was the most expected event of 2018 although it did not bring a tangible results. It was well orchestrated PR show with lot of photo shootings, hands shakes, and smiles exchanges in front of journalist. The real negotiations have been taking place for several weeks ahead of the summit. After the summit a document in the form of Joint Statement. was signed by both leaders. President Trump has declared it to be a comprehensive document, however, the content is more general and rather vague.

The statement consists of mutual commitments to improve bilateral relations. That includes joint efforts to build stable peace regime on peninsula, work together to achieve denuclearization and recover the remains of American prisoners of war (POW) and those Missing in Action (MIA) during the Korean war. The document confirms the commitment of North Korea to complete denuclearization. In addition, the statement expects Mike Pompeo, already in position of Secretary of State to start negotiation with his North Korean counterparts with the aim to achieve denuclearization (White House 2018).

There was nothing significant at this document. What was quite obvious was, that both sides did not really discuss what they understand under the term denuclearization. As suggested above, it was highly unlikely that North Korean leader will be willing to give up nuclear potential that he has concentrated on building since he assumed power. At this time, however he agreed to discuss it likely as a guarantee to keep the negotiations going. Besides of denuclearization an issue of de facto recognition of Kim Jong-un by president Trump has been widely discussed. President Trump has sparked these discussions even more with his press conference that took place just minutes after North Korean delegation left Singapore.

During his address to the journalist he not only praised the talks he has had with North Korean leader but also the relationship that they have formed over the meetings. He expressed a belief that Kim will fulfil his words and implement the provisions of the statement. President has bet on his ability to assess people due to his long lasting business experiences. What was even more interesting and important was his suggested change in U.S. strategy in the Pacific pursued since the end of the WWII and Korean war. He announced his desire to “bring boys back home”, talking about the troops stationed in Japan as well as South Korea (Trump 2018). That move would significantly shift regional security balance in Northeast Asia.

The additional announcement on cancellation of already postponed U.S.-South Korean joint military exercise, was well in accordance with lasting North Korean demands. At this moment it was clear that North Korea has achieved more with this meeting. Not only has the U.S. sitting president met with North Korean leader for the first time in history, but an annual event criticized by North Korean regime was cancelled. That was all achieved by a vague and empty promise to denuclearize and dismantle some of the testing facilities. The dismantlement process started but from what was observed via televised destructions and deconstructions, most are reversible. Additionally, further bilateral talks did not bring significant results. Despite that, second U.S.-DPRK summit took place in February 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The summit was preceded by several rounds of working level talks between U.S. special representative S. Biegun and North Korean nuclear negotiator Kim Hyok-chol. The summit started with a dinner of both leaders. Negotiations took place the other day, however the meeting was interrupted when president Trump decided to walk away.

What is interesting, S. Biegun was not part of president's team meeting North Korean leader. The reason U.S. president walked away was clarified at a press briefing. President said that North Koreans have demanded cancellation of exiting sanction regime in its full scale in exchange for closing some of its testing facilities (Trump 2019). This statement was contradicted by North Korean representatives who claimed that they have asked for a partial lifting of those sanctions that impact the economy of the country the most (Morin 2019). This development only proved that both sides perceive denuclearization very differently. While the U.S. demands complete denuclearization including existing warheads, North Korea sees it more in terms of stopping further development of the program, while preserving the existing capacities. To many observers this was a clear aim of North Korean leader from the beginning. Additionally, as any easing of sanctions was denied by the U.S. the willingness of North Korea to negotiate further was fading.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 2019 an unexpected event took place, president Trump returning from G20 summit in Osaka stopped in South Korea, visited DMZ where he met with Kim Jong-un. This meeting was organized unconventionally, when president Trump tweeted his suggestion to meet. Based on what the leaders discussed, working level talks were renewed. Tightly watched meeting in November in Oslo, however failed to reach any tangible results.

4.2. Meeting the other leaders

Besides meeting president Trump, Kim Jong-un has met three other leaders over the course of 2 years. When looking at the change in North Korean behaviour two aspects need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the fact that Kim has travelled outside of North Korea for the first time since taking over the power suggests that his regime is stable and has no opponents.⁹ In addition, for the first time in North Korean history, all meetings of the leader have been announced to the citizens by official state media, at the time they have been taking place. They have broadcasted videos, published pictures from all meetings. Moreover, they have informed about results of these meetings. Second aspect is related to the goals the regime has assigned to these meetings. From what has been mainly discussed the support of presidents of China and Russia to North Korean request to ease the international sanctions and their practical implementation by both countries was clear. In terms of meeting with South Korean president, it is likely that Kim believed in re-establishment of economic exchanges between both countries.

⁹ From the experiences of other totalitarian states, as well as North Korea we know that in the case of viable opposition present within the political elite, leader is opting not to travel in order not to find himself overthrown.

When looking at meetings chronologically, first foreign leader Kim has met was Chinese president Xi Jinping. The March 25, 2018 summit was the very first official meeting of Kim Jong-un as a leader of DPRK with a head of any other state. During the visit Chinese president has proposed four ways to improve mutual relations between long-term allies. Firstly, the importance of high level exchanges was stressed out. President has announced a desire to meet with Kim as often as possible. Second way was renewing and preserving the party-to-party exchanges, that have a long tradition in bilateral relations. Thirdly, president talked about peaceful development of relations in the future as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and 'DPRK's socialist constructions' have achieved a historical momentum. Fourthly, the need of people-to-people relations was emphasized. Kim Jong-un has praised president Xi for his decisions and policies since assuming power in China. He also talked about the importance of deepening mutual relations (Xinhua 2018). It is possible, that Kim was inspired by the political situation in China, since the Party congress abolished the time limit for the position of president that was in force in China for last three decades. China has proven that regardless of the economic reforms, the system can remain authoritarian with a tendency to strengthen the position of its leader.

Kim and Xi have met at 4 other occasions, twice in 2018 and twice in 2019. The results of these meetings were more symbolic so as the statements signed (Tiezzi 2019). What is however interesting is, that shortly after first summit, China has eased implementation of international sanctions and Chinese investment in industrial parks in North Korea have increased (Silberstein 2019).

Second political leader Kim has met was South Korean president Moon Jae-in. Renewal of inter-Korean relations was part of Moon's policy since his inauguration in 2016, as he was working for those South Korean administration that have introduces sunshine policy. They have met 3 times in 2018. However, since 2019 North Korea does not pay too much attention to inter-Korean relations, as the relations and position of the U.S. are more important.

Despite that, the 3 meetings have produced two significant inter-Korean documents. First, the Panmunjom Declaration signed on April 27, 2018 focuses rather in detail on 3 areas of cooperation. Firstly, the document states desire to improve mutual relations through implementation of documents which have been signed at previous summit meetings. The two leaders agreed on opening a liaison office in Kaesong to intensify mutual relations on multiple levels. Second area relates to the de-escalation of military tensions and the danger of war which should be achieved in concordance with creating a peace regime on the peninsula, which is a third are of cooperation. As stated at the declaration, peace agreement needs to be negotiated with China and the U.S. In addition, both leaders confirmed their desire for denuclearization and nuclear free peninsula (MOFA 2018a).

The second document is the Pyongyang Declaration of September 2018 reaffirming the provisions of previous document and extending them in some areas. The exchange and cooperation as well as normalization of situation in Kaesong industrial park and Mt. Kumgang tourist resort are listed right after the agreement in military affairs. The need of allowing of contacts of separated families is stated as the most important humanitarian and human-to-human relations issue. Further improvement in people-to-people relations in arts, science and sport should also be in focus of mutual relations. The last stressed issue is the commitment to denuclearization and nuclear free peninsula (MOFA 2018b). The most tangible result of the summits is the meeting of the members of separated families, that has taken place at the end of August 2018. In addition, the military cooperation and agreement signed on the side-line of Pyongyang meeting has brought very concrete actions on both sides. The agreement was signed by South Korean Minister of defence and North Korean Minister of People's Armed forces, with the aim to deescalate military tensions in DMZ and NLL (NCNK 2018).

The implementation became a reality when demilitarization of Joint Security Area took place, any exercise in the proximity of DMZ were stopped and several of the guarding posts along DMZ were dismantled. Moreover, a liaison office was opened in Kaesong, where representatives of both states had a chance to meet and discuss every day issues.

However, what is obviously missing from both documents is an area of economic relations and cooperation. For South Korean administration any economic ties are limited by existing sanction regime, and the government is not willing to act against international rules. Despite the fact that North Korean leader and representatives have called for normalization in economic relations. This might be one of the reasons why talks with South Korea lost its importance in North Korea, as these talks cannot bring much benefits for the regime.

Third leader Kim Jong-un has met in 2019 was Russian president Vladimir Putin. Denuclearization was the important topic of this meeting too. Among others state of U.S.-DPRK relations was discussed, with the reasons of failure of Hanoi summit. In addition, economic situation and sanctions were mentioned. However, the meeting was more of a symbolic event for both leaders. President Putin showed desire for Russia to participate at talks related to nuclear program as well as future state of regional relations. For Kim was important to re-establish direct relations with Russia, even though it does not seem he has achieved what he wanted. President Putin did not offer a direct support of North Korea stance or accepted the way the country perceives denuclearization (Kireeva and Zakharova 2019). With this meeting Kim did not get direct support for his position nor assurance that Russia will support his demand to ease the sanctions. Even though Russia is calling for progressive release of sanction regime, no direct benefit came out of meeting for Kim.

Conclusion

When looking at the development in North Korea since current leader Kim Jong-un took power in 2011 we can confirm several assumptions. First of all, the current leadership has significantly boosted its nuclear and missile capabilities. This behaviour confirms the security model as suggested by mentioned scholars, that leads countries to acquire nuclear program. The fact that deterrence might be working was proven when in 2017 possibility of conflict was discussed by members of the U.S. administration, media and also scholars. But it remained only as a discussion or threat mentioned by U.S. president few times. It is probable that the capability of tested North Korean missiles to reach U.S. mainland played a role in deterring any action. This was more or less confirmed when North Korea renewed testing of short and medium range missiles in the second half of 2019 and president Trump addressed that as regular testing of defence capabilities of any country.

Second assumption related to the issue of prestige countries seek was also confirmed by the recent North Korean behaviour. By declaring that it has reached a final stage in development of its nuclear program serves as self-acknowledgement of nuclear power status. North Korea consider itself a nuclear power and since 2019 declared no interest in renewal of inter-Korean negotiations. From statement published by official media the country considers the U.S. to be the only relevant partner for nuclear negotiations. It was suggested by several North Korean observers that the political representatives expect to be dealt differently, as they represent a nuclear power.

The third assumptions regarding the usage of nuclear program as a negotiation tool was also valid. Even though majority of North Korean scholars, including the author, do not expect North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, they are ready for some concessions. They have disbanded some of the missile testing facilities, closed tunnels where nuclear tests were conducted. Even if North Korean leader admitted he was willing to discuss denuclearization, he has never explained what he understands under it. From the failed second summit with president Trump it is clear that complete dismantlement of facilities and nuclear weapon is out of discussion. From North Korean perspective complete denuclearization would be irrational. Political elite has learned, over the years that nuclear program and weapons could bring them benefits. Already the fact that sitting American president has met North Korean leader to discuss their nuclear program proves their usefulness for regime. These meetings have provided North Korea and Kim Jong-un himself with a certain legitimacy. Even without public acknowledgement by politicians, North Korea is a state with nuclear potential, and that is the reality of international relations.

When looking at theoretical sources, North Korean case confirms that decision to proceed with nuclear weapons development is usually not straightforward and there are

multiple reasons behind. For North Korea the security situation it finds itself is the most significant, especially in relations to powers surrounding it, including the U.S. However, the issue of prestige and status nuclear weapons provide plays a role too. Domestically, the position of the leader seems to be bind with nuclear program, vis-à-vis important players within elite, especially military. Moreover, nuclear program is used also by internal propaganda in building picture of current leader as a follower of his predecessors working with the aim to protect citizens from enemies.

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