

**NUCLEAR WEAPON AS A GEOPOLITICAL FACTOR OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF NORTH KOREA)**

**Ядерное оружие как геополитический фактор международных отношений
(на примере Северной Кореи)**

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The greatest nuclear danger that people are concerned with is not the proliferation of nuclear weapons to other states, though that is a grave danger. Of even greater concern is the invidious belief of policy makers in a small number of states that they have a right to maintain nuclear weapons indefinitely, and that in their hands nuclear weapons do not constitute a threat either to their own citizens or to the remainder of humanity. At the fact of such concern the most alarm question is can the twenty-first century be nuclear free? That is the dream of many people concerned with weapons of mass destruction. Some steps in that direction were taken, but much more needs to be done, and the danger of nuclear materials falling into the wrong hands remains acute.

Why do people pay attention to this topic and exactly to North Korea? The answer is obvious. The DPRK is an exciting object for discussion on the modern political stage. First of all, communist regime of this state, which makes some democratic states, such as the United States and its allies in the Northeast Asia – Japan and South Korea “feel uncomfortable”, causes some international problems. Due to the fact that North Korea is a closed state, it has very limited ties with some countries, world community can hardly trace its policy and impose sanctions. Secondly, the DPRK breaks laws and international agreements, concerning non-proliferation. In 2003 North Korea withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NTP), so no one knows what to expect from this state in the future. The third reason we must pay attention to is the growing nuclear power of North Korea and its ambitious tendencies in this field stands a global problem of nuclear proliferation.

To understand why North Korea started the development of nuclear weapon and what exactly influenced it, we have to overview backgrounds of its development, to look through the history of this phenomenon.

Korea has been a divided country since 1945, when it was liberated from the defeated Japan after World War II. The Korean War was fought from June 25, 1950, until a ceasefire was signed on July 27, 1953. However, since North Korea and South Korea have still not officially made peace, strictly speaking, the war has not officially ended yet.

This way, tensions between North and South have run higher and higher on numerous occasions since 1953. The deployment of the U.S. Army's Second Infantry Division on the Korean peninsula and the American military presence in the Korean Demilitarized Zone are publicly regarded by North Korea as an occupying army. These circumstances allowed the US forces to be headquartered there to maintain peace in the region, however, their presence is fueling the tensions. The tension led to the border clash in 1976, which has become known as the Axe Murder Incident [1].

According to newly declassified documents from the archives of former communist allies of North Korea, Pyongyang first began to pursue nuclear technology as early as 1956. One of the reasons why the DPRK hastened efforts to acquire the technology to produce nuclear weapons was the early 1960s security concerns in the region and an apparent Soviet dismissal [2]. In particular the two most important factors in North Korea's attempts to become militarily self-reliant were the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 and the prospect of a US–Japan–ROK alliance following the 1965 establishment of diplomatic relations between the ROK and Japan. Kim Il Sung reportedly did not trust that the Soviets would live up to the conditions of the mutual defense pact and guarantee North Korea's security since they betrayed Castro by withdrawing nuclear missiles in an effort to improve relations with the United States [2]. As a North Korean official explained to Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin in 1965, "the Korean leaders were distrustful of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and the Soviet government, they could not count on that the Soviet government would keep the obligations related to the defense of Korea it assumed in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and

Mutual Assistance, Kim Il said, and therefore they were compelled to keep an army of 700,000 and a police force of 200,000" [2]. Explaining the cause of such mistrust, the official claimed that "the Soviet Union had betrayed Cuba at the time of the Caribbean crisis" [3]. However, as recently declassified Russian, Hungarian, and East German materials confirm, no communist governments were willing to share the technology with the North Koreans, out of fear that they would share the technology with China [4].

After collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea was in need of another nuclear power since Pyongyang could not afford to maintain its military posture. Therefore, the DPRK tried to build relationships with the United States. But the U.S. rejected this proposal and stated that only six-party talks that also include the People's Republic of China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea are acceptable. Six-party talks were not held as North Korea refused to take part in them. Finally, North Korean government had to conduct development themselves. And on October 9, 2006, the North Korean government issued an announcement that it had successfully conducted a nuclear test for the first time. Both the United States Geological Survey and Japanese seismological authorities detected an earthquake with a preliminary estimated magnitude of 4.2 in North Korea, corroborating some aspects of the North Korean claims [5]. Later on May 25, 2009 North Korea conducted a second test of a nuclear weapon.

This way, the start of the North Korean developments of nuclear weapon was caused by the complicated political situation in the region. Spoiled international relationships with the U.S., Japan and division of the country into two different – all had its profound impact. Besides, the support received from the Soviet Union became the background of invention.

What are the reasons to be threatened? As we found earlier North Korean leaders see the country's security in possession of a nuclear weapon and missile program. But does this defense program threaten the security of other countries? We can say for sure – no!

The North Korean threat comes in two forms: vertical - development of its nuclear capability and horizontal - spread of nuclear know-how and technology to others. Pyongyang tested two nuclear devices and is believed to be working on a third. Experts say Pyongyang has enough fissile material for 5-12 nuclear weapons [7]. The regime is also scrambling to develop its ballistic missile program.

What's more, the regime appears to be developing its ties with other actors bent on acquiring a nuclear capability, including those in the Middle East (Pakistan, Iran, Israel).

When considering the dangers of the North Korean nuclear weapons program, politicians find that the first and the main reason is proliferation of nuclear weapon. If the DPRK develops nuclear weapons, its neighbors will inevitably do so, too. Former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, for example, said, "The governments of the world must understand what a threat it is if the DPRK gets nuclear weapons, because there are probably 10 other countries in the East over the next 10 to 20 years that would follow down that road" [6].

Indeed, since the dawn of the nuclear age, many states have feared rapid and widespread nuclear proliferation. 65 years later, only nine countries have developed nuclear weapons. Nearly 20 years elapsed between the emergence of the first nuclear state, the United States, in 1945, and the fifth, China, in 1964. The next 40 years gave birth to four additional nuclear countries: India, Israel, South Africa, and Pakistan [8]. Similarly, it has now been a long time since North Korea became a nuclear weapon state. The fruit of such a rapid and widespread nuclear proliferation is unknown to anyone.

The second reason to be threatened is that North Korea's arsenal will surely grow, as will the amount of its fissile material. The results of this growth will be destabilizing and potentially disastrous: a sizable North Korean nuclear arsenal might well stimulate similar weapons programs, for example, in both Japan and South Korea, diminishing the region's stability. Worse, Japan might decide to undertake a nuclear weapon program of its own, which would surely provoke a Chinese response, which in turn could cause reverberations in India and Pakistan. There could also be repercussions in Taiwan and South Korea, both of which had fledgling nuclear weapon programs of their own before U.S. pressure forced their termination [9]. The repercussions could also spread far beyond Northeast Asia if Pyongyang decides to sell its new weapons or nuclear fuel for hard currency – as it was with drugs and missile technology in the past.

It is necessary to emphasize that, perhaps, there is a larger danger: North Korea could sell its plutonium, highly enriched uranium, or finished weapons to other countries or terrorists. Its track record with ballistic missiles is not encouraging. It has made missile deals with Iran, Yemen, Syria,

and Pakistan—lucrative sources of income to the impoverished country [10]. Fissile material and nuclear weapons would be even more lucrative.

The third reason is the risks of nuclear terrorism. Terrorism has become an accepted and integrated part of the national security policies of the nuclear weapons states. Terrorism is the threat to injure or kill innocent people unless the terrorist's demands are met. Nuclear weapons threaten to injure or kill innocent people. That is what they are designed to do. That is what may happen if North Korea does not stop proliferation. That is what the DPRK threatens to do as a matter of policy. The nuclear weapons states, no matter how they argue their intentions, have become terrorist states. They have made their citizens either willing or unwilling accomplices in acts of terrorism. In time, if nothing is done to alter the present situation in the world, other states or criminal groups will obtain nuclear weapons and they will also act as terrorists.

Furthermore, the DPRK is a closed society and the covert nature of its nuclear program makes it a “difficult intelligence collection target,” as the international community puts it [11]. No one knows what North Korea’s nuclear intentions are — Pyongyang relies heavily on ambiguity in all it does. Has Kim Jong Il decided that North Korea’s security requires a stockpile of nuclear weapons? Pyongyang is simply ready to play hardball. The world community’s hope that North Korea will give up its nuclear program seems fanciful at this point. What incentives could possibly be offered that would cause it to give up its weapons program, dismantle its nuclear complex, and agree to an intrusive verification regime? It is highly unlikely that North Korea will agree to abandon the very thing that gives it leverage with its neighbors.

To sum up it is necessary to mark out, that nowadays some countries maintain nuclear weapons indefinitely. There is indeed urgency in the assertion that danger of the threat from nuclear weapons will remain for as long as there are nuclear weapons. There is also a belief that makes us think it over, if we really live in a safe world and what we can do to change the situation.

The one thing I can probably say for sure about the prospects for universal nuclear disarmament is that no state will agree either to abjure or to dismantle nuclear weapons unless it believes that such a course is the best course for its own national security. So, we should persuade states like North Korea to follow international rules and agreements and this way start disarmament. By this article I want to attract attention of other people to this problem. As consider that preventing of nuclear proliferation we should start with ourselves. Everybody can take in the motto: The risk of a nuclear catastrophe is far greater than we think. Our ability to reduce that risk is far greater than we imagine. Let's start tapping into that ability!

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