



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND DENUCLEARIZATION OF NORTH KOREA: INTERROGATING THE IMPERATIVE FOR FREEZE-FOR-FREEZE OPTION

ITUMO, A., NNAJI, F. C. AND NWOBASHI, H. N.

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ABSTRACT

The continued nuclear enrichment by North Korea despite several sanctions from the United Nations Security Council has continued to attract mixed reactions from scholars, security experts, policy makers and strategic thinkers. The issue has generated serious controversy which has become a critical subject of concern that dominates debates in many international and local discourses since the recent time. In most of these fora relevant stakeholders have proposed solutions for the denuclearization of North Korea in view of its implications for both regional stability and global security. This paper interrogates the import and feasibility of the freeze-for-freeze option proposed by Russia and China for the denuclearization of North Korea. Data for the study were sourced from secondary sources, specifically from published journal articles, official gazettes from relevant government agencies and institutions. The theoretical framework that anchors the study is the theory of Collective Security while content analytical technique is employed for data analysis. A critical analysis of data revealed among others, that; North Korea's nuclear armament has thrown up tension in the Korea peninsula which poses a grave threat to South East Asian stability, global peace and security. This is further exacerbated by frequent joint military drills between the United States and South Korea close to North Korean border. The study also discovered that the use of sanctions has failed to disempower North Korea from becoming a nuclear power hence the argument for the adoption of Freeze-for-Freeze option. The study recommended amongst others that the United Nations Security Council members should cooperate and adopt a non-military option towards North Korea's denuclearization in order to save the world from a nuclear war. Furthermore, the US should reconsider a cessation of her joint military drills with South Korea in exchange for a full disarmament of all North Korean nuclear weapons and associated facilities. In all, the paper recommended for an internationally supervised peace treaty between North and South Korea that pledges mutual non-aggression and restoration of full diplomatic relations.

KEYWORDS: Nuclear Weapons, Proliferation, Sanctions, Freeze-for-Freeze, Denuclearization

INTRODUCTION

The level of destruction and collateral damages occasioned by the Second World War, particularly the huge devastation effects of the first atomic bomb dropped by American B-29 bombers in two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki in 1945 quickly changed the perception of states on the use of nuclear weapons in the event of war. To forestall further occurrence as the war ended, the United Nations was formed in 1945 to replace the paralysed League of Nations. To further reposition the United Nations to deliver

Itumo, A., Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki, Nigeria
Nnaji, F. C., Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki, Nigeria
Nwobashi, H. N., Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki, Nigeria

on its mandate of maintaining peace and security across the globe, the United Nations Security Council was formed as one of its main organs. The mandate of the United Nations Security Council as explicitly defined in Article 24 of Chapter V is to primarily bear the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the post war period witnessed a profound ideological rivalry code named cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union which led to unbridled arms race with both sides having nuclear capabilities and Mutual Assured Destruction. To this end, various arms control and limitation treaties were engineered and entered into by states to stem the tide of nuclear weapons proliferation and production of similar weapons of mass destruction.

Scholars have noted that it was against this backdrop that such treaties as:

the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963; Outer Space Treaty of 1967; Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968; Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) of 1972; Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972; Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1) of 1991 and START II of 1993 and most recently New START Treaty of 2010 were signed by world powers in order to checkmate nuclear arms proliferation among each other and to deter non-nuclear states from becoming one (Rusten, 2010 :10; Woolf, 2010:18; Baker and Barry, 2010:12; US Department of State, 2018; and Kristensen & Norris, 2018:122).

In view of the above, North Korea agreed to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state in December 1985 in exchange for Soviet assistance for constructing four Light Water Reactors (LWRs). Essentially, the NPT recognises five states as nuclear weapon states: the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China which are the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2017 and Park, 2020). Meanwhile, North Korea proceeded to sign an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguard Agreement on 30th January, 1992 and under the terms of the agreement, North Korea provided an initial declaration of its nuclear facilities and materials and allowed the IAEA inspectors to verify the completeness and correctness of its initial declaration.

However subsequent IAEA analysis indicated that North Korea technicians had reprocessed plutonium on three occasions in 1989, 1990 and 1991. When the agency requested access to two suspected nuclear waste sites, North Korea

declared the sites to be military sites and therefore off-limits (Jung, 2017). In reaction to this, the United States suspended heavy oil shipments to the country and North Korea retaliated by lifting the freeze on its nuclear facilities, expelled IAEA inspectors and announced its withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in January 2003 (Hirsh, Liu and Wehrfritz, 2006 and Washington Post, 2006).

As a result of the foregoing, the subsequent years following the dawn of the 21st century witnessed a total violation of moratorium on nuclear proliferation by North Korea. The country declared the Six-Party Talks Agreement void and moved ahead to conduct its first nuclear weapon test in 2006. It carried out subsequent second test in 2009; third test in 2013; and fourth and fifth tests in 2016 and sixth test believed to be hydrogen bomb in September 2017 (Choe, 2016; The Telegraph 2016 and Korea Central News Agency, 2017). As a response to this nuclear weapons proliferation, the United Nations Security Council imposed series of sanctions covering restrictions on arms trade and financial transactions, inspection of all passing cargo to and from North Korea, expulsion of certain North Korean diplomats and restriction on the country's export of its workers (Security Council Report, 2018).

In essence, scholars have adduced some reasons behind North Korea's nuclear armament. Hence, Mosher (2018), Fiefied (2017), and Vitskoskaya (2017) have noted that North Korea's defiant quest for nuclear armament is largely informed by Kim Jong-Un's interpretation of the experience of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya with US on similar issue. Essentially, Gaddafi was persuaded by the United States to dismantle his country's nuclear weapon programme and reaffirm Libya's commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Eventually when the Libyan leadership complied US led forces later invaded the country in 2011 following an uprising during which Gaddafi was killed. To this end, North Korea views the US with utmost distrust and insists it will not give up its nuclear weapons which the regime sees as a veritable tool for national survival, security and deterrence. Furthermore, the nuclear tension in the Korean peninsula was exacerbated by the recurrent annual US-South Korea joint military exercise close to the border with North Korea as it further heightened and deepened the mistrust and suspicion by North Korea over the United States. The North Korean leadership views it as

provocative and deliberate rehearsal for its invasion (Ryall, 2017).

As a response measure, Kim Jong-un continued to order ballistic missile launch and atomic tests including its ever-largest hydrogen bomb test in September, 2017 with a magnitude of 6.1 and 140 kilotons yield (Centre for Security, 2018). This has led to series of sanctions against North Korea by the United Nations Security Council, the US and her allies. Despite the series of sanctions levelled against North Korea, its allies notably China and Russia have rallied round Pyongyang and warned against use of military action (Clark, 2017). This scenario has been viewed as potential impediment to the realization of the set objectives behind the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and by extension poses danger to both regional and international peace and security (Carpenter, 2017).

In view of the implications of the tensions generated by North Korea's nuclear armament for both regional stability and global security, relevant stakeholders have proposed solutions for the denuclearization of North Korea and the need for complete denuclearization that Russia and China proposed for the freeze-for freeze option. The freeze-for-freeze option is a proposal whereby North Korea agrees for a halt of her nuclear weapons proliferation and missiles tests in exchange for US cessation of her joint military exercises with South Korea (Scimia, 2017). Advocates of this option has argued that the United States has overtly contributed to recurrent nuclear war tension in the Korean peninsula through its annual massive joint military exercises with South Korea which North Korea views as highly provocative and also a rehearsal for war. It is further argued that the massive show of force amid an already tense stand-off over North Korea's nuclear and missile testing presents a catalyst for potential nuclear war. Although, the exercise had been routinely described by US and South Korean officials as defensive measures, North Korea views this furiously as offensive. Accordingly, Scimia (2017) argued that the Chinese and Russian proposal for freeze of US-South Korea joint military exercises in exchange for North Korea's halt of her nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles test can be negotiated to put an end to an imminent nuclear war that could spiral into a third world war. Furthermore, the freeze-for-freeze option will reduce the number of US forces in the Korean Peninsula and put limitation to Russian and Chinese joint military exercises in the Sea of Japan. Despite the novelty of these arguments, scholars have paid

fleeting attention to unearthing the feasibility of this option in denuclearizing North Korea and easing off the nuclear tension in the Korea Peninsula. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to critically examine the Freeze- For-Freeze option as panacea for the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea. To address the problem the researcher raises this question; what are the efforts made by United Nations Security Council to denuclearize North Korea? Why did the use of sanctions by the United Nations Security Council failed to compel North Korea to denuclearize? Is the freeze-for-freeze a viable option for denuclearizing North Korea?

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a documentary research and as such dwelt extensively on qualitative data. In view of the above, the relevant data for the study were sourced from secondary materials as contained in the already existing works of researchers from the internet, online journals, books, articles, newspapers and official gazettes of relevant international agencies and state institutions. The study relied heavily on content analytical technique for the analysis of data while tables were used for the presentation of data to enhance clarity of information and for the avoidance of ambiguity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that anchored the analysis of this study is the theory of Collective Security. The theory of collective security advocates for political, regional, or global security arrangement in which each state in the system accepts that the security of one is the concern of all, and therefore commits to a collective response to threats to or breaches to peace. Thus, collective security rests on a system based on the universal obligation of all nations to join forces against an aggressor state as soon as the fact of aggression is established (Niemeyer, 1954:19). The term collective security has long been part and parcel of the principles of the United Nations and the defunct League of Nations. The proponents of collective security are Kant (1795); Wight (1977); Organski (1958). For these scholars, collective security means an agreement between states to abide by certain norms and rules, to maintain stability and when necessary band together to stop aggression.

This description captures three distinct ideas, first, the purpose or end of stopping an aggression; second, the reliance on legal norms

to determine both the meaning of that term and the appropriate response and third, the rejection of self-help in favour of collective action. In light of the foregoing, Organski (1965) posited that the idea of Collective Security presupposes that all member nation-states of the system are equally committed to contain and constrain a known aggression, irrespective of its source or origin. Thus, the cumulative power of the cooperating members of the alliance for collective security will be adequate and sufficient to overpower the might of the aggressor. In realization of the perceived possible threat posed by the collective might of the nations that may come as result of collective security coalition, the aggressor nation will be forced to modify its policies, or if unwilling to do so, will be defeated.

From the foregoing, it is imperative to state that the applicability of the theory of collective security to the present study derives from the primary objectives of the United Nations Security Council which amongst other things hinges on the maintenance of international peace and security as enshrined under article 24. It was on this basis and in a bid to provide for collective security that the most consistent actor in nuclear disarmament in the UN family, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established in 1957 (Boulden, Thakur, & Weiss, 2009). Similarly, the global efforts to control the proliferation of nuclear weapons marked a watershed when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was opened for signature on July, 1, 1968 and entered into force on March 5, 1970 for the sake of achieving collective security. The NPT is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and it obligates all non-nuclear weapons states (non-NWS) to abstain from developing nuclear weapons (Article 11). In return, it recognizes the right of these states to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In the light of the above, it therefore behoves on the Permanent members of the UN Security Council to cooperate and every hand must be on deck to ensure a comprehensive and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea. Hence, in the interest of regional and international peace and of course for collective security, the United States should provide genuine security assurances to the North Korean regime, cease all forms of provocative military drills in the Korean Peninsula and lift sanctions in exchange for a concurrent dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear programme under a deal involving other critical actors including China, Russia, Japan and South Korea. It is in line with the trust of the theory of

collective security that the proposed freeze for freeze option was born, hence its aptness to the explanation of this study.

ANALYTICAL DISCOURSE

United Nations Security Council's Efforts towards Denuclearization of North Korea

Specifically, in 1985 following diplomatic engagement, North Korea eventually accepted to formally sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state though in exchange for a technical assistance from the Soviet Union for the construction of four light water reactors (LWRs). This was considered a breakthrough as North Korea proceeded to sign both the joint declaration on denuclearization of the Korea Peninsula and an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement in 1992. However, this progress was short-lived when North Korea blocked IAEA access to two suspected nuclear waste sites in the country declaring them to be military sites and therefore off-limits (Jung, 2017). In swift response to this development, the UN Security Council passed resolution 825 on May 11, 1993, which urged the DPRK to cooperate with the IAEA and work towards a committed implementation of the 1991 North-South Denuclearization Accord. As North Korea reluctantly delayed to abide by the resolution, it faced renewed UN sanctions and defiantly withdrew from the IAEA on June 13, 1994 but remained a member of the NPT.

The collapse of the 1994 agreed framework between the US and North Korea under which the former was to arrange for the provision of LWRs with a generating capacity of approximately 2000 MW(e) in the exchange for the latter's freeze and ultimate dismantlement of its reactors further deteriorated the situation. Thus, when the US delayed the construction of the LWRs and subsequently suspended heavy oil shipments in December 2002, North Korea retaliated on January 10, 2003 by announcing its withdrawal from the NPT (KCNA, 2003). The attempt to resolve the impasse led to the Six-Party talks comprising the US, South Korea, North Korea, China, Russia and Japan which began in 2003 with the aim of ending North Korea nuclear weapons programme, but little was however accomplished. The situation continued to deteriorate and the talks completely stalled in 2005. In October, 2006 North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. In response, the UN Security Council expressed concern over the nuclear test, passed resolution 1718 which prohibited states from transferring or providing luxury goods,

heavy military equipment or dual use items to North Korea (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016). In defiance, North Korea on May 25, 2009 furthermore issued a statement thus: “the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea successfully conducted one more underground nuclear test on May 25 as part of the measures to bolster up its nuclear deterrent for self-defence in every way as requested by its scientists and technicians” (Washington Post, 2009:2). In response to the second nuclear test, the UN Security Council Passed Resolution 1874 which tightened the financial sanctions and trade restrictions on North Korea, while also calling on all countries to inspect vessels believed to be carrying prohibited cargo, in ports and in the high seas and to seize and dispose of such cargo if it was identified (Niksch, 2009). North Korea successfully carried out the third nuclear test in February 2013. According to the Korean Central News Agency, KCNA (2013) “The February 2013 nuclear test was to develop a smaller and light warhead”. Following the 2013 nuclear test, all UN Security Council members approved a press statement condemning the test and pledging further action. In a 15-0 vote on March 7, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions that further constrained DPRK trade, travel and banking, while imploring countries to search any suspect DPRK cargo (UN Security Council Report, 2013). The January 2016 fourth nuclear test by North Korea was followed by an announcement in which the country stated that it had successfully developed and tested a hydrogen bomb. A month before the test, Kim Jong-Un

claimed that North Korea was a powerful nuclear weapons state ready to detonate self-reliant A-bomb and H- bomb to reliably defend its sovereignty and the dignity of the nation (Korean Central News Agency, 2016).

As a response to the test the UN Security Council in its resolution 2270 decided to toughen its existing sanctions. The resolution was accompanied with numerous different restriction to the sanctions regime, thus countries were compelled to effectively and thoroughly inspect all North Korean exports and imports, completely halt the purchase of certain North Korea rare-earth minerals, limit the purchase of North Korean coal and iron exports and imports of jet to the country, expel certain institutions and individual from their countries, seize and refuse port access for certain DPRK ships and end any relationship with DPRK banks (Somini & Choe, 2016). Existing sanctions notwithstanding, North Korea in September 9, 2016, carried out fifth nuclear test and the Security Council once more unanimously adopted resolution 2321 which significantly expanded sanctions on North Korea. The resolution principally called on all member states to reduce number of bank accounts held by diplomats and missions and suspended scientific and technical cooperation with North Korea. The sixth nuclear test on September 3, 2017 was met with more severe sanctions against North Korea. The UN Security Council Resolution 2375 primarily targeted North Korea oil imports, textile exports and overseas labourers (Davenport, 2017).

Table 1: Timeline of North Korea's Nuclear Tests

S/N	Date	Nuclear Tests description	Estimated Yield	Magnitude
1	October 9, 2006	North Korea successfully carried out its first nuclear atomic test in an underground explosion.	0.5 – 2 Kilotons (kt)	4.1mb
2	May 25, 2009	An underground atomic explosion which is reported to be as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb was carried out by North Korea.	2 – 4 Kilotons (kt)	4.52mb
3	February 12, 2013	A miniaturized lighter nuclear device with greater explosive force than previous tests was carried out by North Korea.	7 – 9 Kilotons (kt)	4.9mb
4	January 6, 2016	North Korea carried out its first underground test of a hydrogen bomb signaling the country's huge leap forward in its nuclear capabilities.	7 – 10 Kilotons (kt)	4.85mb
5	September 9, 2016	North Korea carried out a successful test of a nuclear warhead that can be mounted on a strategic range ballistic missile.	10 Kilotons (kt)	5.1mb
6	September 13, 2017	North Korea carried out its ever largest hydrogen bomb test causing an earthquake felt as far away as Vladivostok, Russia; a test carried out to check power control technology and a new design for producing H – bomb to be placed as the payload of the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).	140 Kilotons (kt)	6.1mb

Sources: 1. Centre for Strategic and International Studies (2017).
 2. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO, 2017).
 3. Republic of Korea (ROK) Ministry of Defense (2017).

The table above conspicuously shows that North Korea has successfully carried out six atomic tests between 2006 and 2017 despite series of United Nations Security Resolutions and associated sanctions on the country. Specifically, the 3rd nuclear test on February, 2013 marked the first under the country's current leader Kim Jong-un and the test was far larger than the previous two explosions with experts estimating the bomb to be between 7 to 9 kilo tonnes. Moreover, the September, 2016 nuclear test recorded a seismic of 5.3 magnitude earthquake and a surface blast of 20 to 30 Kilo tonne yield

much larger than the atomic bomb dropped by the United States on the Japanese city of Hiroshima during World War 11 (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016). In the same vein, The Korean Central News Agency (2016) reported that the test proves that North Korea is now capable of mounting a nuclear warhead on a medium range ballistic missile. The standardization of the nuclear warhead will enable the DPRK to produce at will and as many as it wants a variety of smaller, lighter and diversified nuclear warheads of higher strike power.

Table 2: List of UN Security Council Resolutions and Sanctions Related to North Korea's Nuclear Proliferation from 1993 – 2010.

Date	Resolution	Content
11 May, 1993	S/RES/825	Urged North Korea to reconsider its withdrawal from the he Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and oblige by its international obligations.
15 July, 2006	S/RES/1695	Condemned North Korea's 2006 launch of ballistic missiles and imposed sanction.
14 October, 2006	S/RES/1718	Expressed concern over North Korea's 2006 nuclear test, imposed sanctions and set up the sanctions committee on North Korea.
12 June, 2009	S/RES/1874	Expressed concern over North Korea's 2009 nuclear test. Extended sanctions to concern all arms material and related financial transaction, technical training, advice, services or assistance, management and maintenance. Set up the panel of expert to assist the sanctions committee.
24 September, 2009	S/RES/1887	Called for implementing the UNSC resolution 1540 for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.
7 June, 2010	S/RES/1928	Extended the mandate of the panel of experts until 12 June, 2011.

Source:<http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org/list-of-united-nations-Security-Council-resolution-concerning-North-Korea>

Table 3: List of UN Security Council Resolutions and Sanctions Related to North Korea's Nuclear**Proliferation from 2011 – 2017.**

Date	Resolution	Content
10 June, 2011	S/RES/1985	Extended the mandate of the panel of Experts until 12 June, 2012 and asked it to submit its mid-term and final report to the sanctions committee for discussion one month before they are submitted to the Security Council.
12 June, 2012	S/RES/2050	Extended the mandate of the panel of Experts until 12 June, 2013.
22 January, 2013	S/RES/2087	Condemned North Korea's 2012 Satellite launch and added sanctions.
7 March, 2013	S/RES/2094	Imposed sanctions after North Korea's 2013 nuclear test.
5 March, 2014	S/RES/2141	Extended the mandate of the panel of Experts until 5 April, 2015.
4 March, 2015	S/RES/2207	Extended the mandate of the panel of Experts until 5 April, 2016.
2 March, 2016	S/RES/2270	Imposed sanction after North Korea 2016 nuclear and missile test. Sanctions include inspection of all passing cargo to and from North Korea, prohibition of all weapons trade with the country.
30 November, 2016	S/RES/2321	The UNSC unanimously sanctions regime against the DPRK in response to the country's 9 September nuclear test.
23 March, 2017	S/RES/2345	The UNSC extended the mandate of the panel of experts into 2018.
2 June, 2017	S/RES/2356	The UNSC unanimously sanctioned a list of individuals and entities designated as being engaged in or providing support for Pyongyang's nuclear related programme.
5 August, 2017	S/RES/2371	The UNSC unanimously strengthened its sanctions regime against North Korea in response to that country's 28 July, 2017 missile test.
11 September, 2017	S/RES/2375	The UNSC unanimously strengthened its oil sanctions regime against North Korea in response to that country's sixth nuclear test, limits exports of refined petroleum products to North Korea from 4 to 2 million barrels annually, bans overseas sales of North Korea textiles and further restricts the country's export of its workers.
22 December, 2017	S/RES/2397	The UNSC unanimously strengthened its sanctions in response to the launch of Hwasong – 15 intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Source: <http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org/list-of-united-nations-Security-Council-resolution-concerning-North-Korea>

THE FREEZE-FOR-FREEZE OPTION AND DENUCLEARIZATION OF NORTH KOREA

The freeze-for-freeze option is generally referred to as a proposal whereby North Korea agrees for a halt of her nuclear weapons proliferation and missiles tests in exchange for US cessation of her joint military exercises with South Korea (Scimia, 2017). This option has been viewed by some scholars as the solution for the denuclearization of North Korea. As aptly observed by Premamevaswaran (2017) with North Korea's recent launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), it has become imperative for the Trump administration to pursue the freeze-for-freeze option also known as double freeze as strongly advocated by China and Russia. It is argued that United States has overtly contributed to recurrent nuclear war tension in the Korean peninsula through its annual massive joint military exercises with South Korea which North Korea views very provocative and also as a rehearsal for war. As noted by Vitkovskaya, (2017), the 2016 exercise involved 300,000 South Korean troops and around 17,000 American military personnel backed by warships and warplanes which amounts to declaration of war.

More so, the 2017 annual US-South Korea massive joint military drills featured the United States Navy sending the air craft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, and its strike group of two guided destroyers and a guided missile cruiser. Similarly, the US Marine Corps dispatched sophisticated F-35B stealth fighters from Japan to the Korean Proliferation Treaty only to be killed in 2011 following American led NATO forces invasion of his country (Carpenter, 2017). These stark memories inform why Kim sees nuclear bomb and ballistic missiles as a survival tool for the regime and for deterrence. Thus, it is viewed that the freeze-for-freeze option will to large extent persuade North Korea to dismantle her nuclear weapon facilities and cease further uranium enrichment. Carpenter (2017); and Vyas, Chen & Roy (2015) reiterated that there is almost no prospect for a military solution to North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. They contend tenaciously that bombing North Korea's nuclear facilities which already house nuclear and radioactive materials will likely cause damages and environmental hazards that will hurt thousands of civilians. Carpenter (2017) specifically pointed out that given the paranoid and impetuous nature of North Korea's leadership of Kim Jong-Un, any US military strike

Peninsula for the first time (Symonds, 2017). This massive show of force amid an already tense stand-off over North Korea's nuclear and missile testing presents a catalyst for potential nuclear war. The exercise had been routinely described by US and South Korean officials previously as defensive but North Korea views this furiously as offensive. Accordingly, Scimia (2017) argued that the Chinese and Russian proposal for freeze of US-South Korea joint military exercises in exchange for North Korea's halt of her nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles test can be negotiated to put an end to an imminent nuclear war that could spiral into a third world war. Furthermore, the freeze-for-freeze option will reduce the number of US forces in the Korean Peninsula and put limitation to Russian and Chinese joint military exercises in the Sea of Japan. The area of de-escalation should cover the Korean Peninsula, the Sea of Japan, the yellow Sea, the Bohai Gulf and the northern part of the East China Sea.

O'Hanlon (2018) submitted that the denuclearization of North Korea needs conviction, incentives and reassurances for regime security for the North Korea leadership and military elite. The experience of Muammer Gaddafi of Libya has emboldened Kim Jong-un to tenaciously hold onto his country's nuclear armament. In retrospect, Muammer Gaddafi was convinced to make a deal with the United States, abandon its nascent nuclear programme and reaffirm the country's commitment to the Non-Nuclear on the DPRK is likely to invite Pyongyang's counterattack on Seoul resulting in devastation of the City and a possible nuclear war. In the same vein, Kelly (2017) maintains that if you attack them (North Korea) now that they have the nuclear weapons, it's not a preventive war. It's just a plain old nuclear war.

CONCLUSION

Needless to state that the continued tests of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles by North Korea have resulted to security dilemma in North East Asia. This informs why the United Nations Security Council views North Korea's nuclear proliferation as a blatant violation of article 39 of the UN Charter under which the Security Council has determined that North Korea's actions constitute a threat to international peace and security. In the same vein, the United States expresses grave concern on North Korea's nuclear weapon development and

maintains that allowing the country to acquire nuclear weapon could result to terrorists' access to the weapons of mass destruction as Pyongyang maintains close links with states associated with sponsorship of terrorism like Iran and Syria.

Nevertheless, the use of sanctions has not been able to starve off North Korea from accessing funds needed for its nuclear armament. This is largely due to close cooperation the country still maintains with allies notably China and Russia. On the contrary, North Korea's closest neighbours like South Korea and Japan strongly argue that the inability of the international community to stop North Korea from further nuclear tests is a direct threat to their security and survival. Hence, the two countries have begun to consider developing their own nuclear weapons for counter deterrence. Be this as it may, the cost of North Korea's denuclearization via a military force far outweighs every other possible option and this underscores the imperative of a close assessment of the Freeze-for-Freeze option for the denuclearization of North Korea.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations have become pertinent;

i. There is need for all member States of the United Nations Security Council to work together and adopt a workable modality and avoid military option towards the denuclearization of North Korea in order to save the world system from total chaos that may arise from military confrontation.

ii. The United States should desist from further frequent military provocations in the form of joint military drills with South Korea and diplomatically negotiate an end to North Korea's nuclear programme under a freeze-for-freeze formula.

iii. The Chinese leadership under President Xi Jinping should leverage on his influence over North Korea and genuinely pursue the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in line with UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions.

iv. In order to fast track a peaceful withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, it is pertinent that North Korea signs a peace treaty with South Korea which shall include a mutual non-aggression treaty and full restoration of diplomatic relations.

v. It is also pertinent to consider phase by phase lifting of sanctions and trade embargo on North Korea as the nuclear talks improve. This will serve as incentive to the Kim regime to reconsider further nuclear weapons test and ballistic missiles launch.

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