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DENUCLEARIZATION OF NORTH KOREA : KAZAKHSTAN WOULD BE THE MODEL TO FOLLOW

Daniel KAKESE MUNGOY

Professor and Expert in international relations at the National Pedagogical University/Kinshasa-DRC

SUMMARY

In this article it will be a question analyzing whether the so-called denuclearization would be operational and effective. A brief presentation of North Korea will be made while trying to highlight the reasons why North Korea wants nuclear weapons as well as underlying the likely related challenges. Most importantly, the article suggests that Kazakhstan model would be suitable for North Korea, should the denuclearization take place.

Keywords : Denuclearization, North Korea and Kazakhstan

RESUME

Dans cet article, nous nous interrogeons sur le point de savoir si la dénucléarisation serait opérationnelle et efficace. Une brève présentation de la Corée du Nord sera faite tout en essayant de mettre en évidence les raisons pour lesquelles la Corée du Nord souhaite l'arme nucléaire ainsi que les problèmes qui lui sont probablement liés. Plus important encore, l'article suggère que le modèle du Kazakhstan conviendrait à la Corée du Nord si la dénucléarisation avait lieu.

Mots-clés : Dénucléarisation, Corée du Nord et Kazakhstan

INTRODUCTION

For years, several attempts to denuclearize North Korea has been made but with no success due to many reasons among which the complex nature of denuclearization itself and the hard political line of the successive regimes in Pyongyang.

Recently, the issue came back on the track with the meeting between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-Un (who entered for the first time South Korean territory), respectively leaders of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

This meeting was followed by a series of summits held by Donald Trump, the United States of America President and Kim Jong- Un, the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on June 19, 2018 in Singapore first and then in Hanoi from February 27 to 28, 2019, giving so, hope as regards the solving of the problem. But so far, there have been no concrete results except declarations of good intents from both sides in favor of the Korean peninsula denuclearization.¹

Now that the negotiations have resumed, the question remains to know whether North Korea, the main player as far as its own denuclearization is concerned will really keep its word. Likewise, how the other important stakeholders will go about this issue to get to the end of the tunnel is still not clear.

I. PRESENTATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a state that covers the Northern part of the Korean peninsula located in Eastern Asia. In 2016, it accounted for 25 million inhabitants. Its capital city is Pyongyang. It is a communist state having a unique party.

North Korea is bordered by China (1,416 kms) in the North, Russia (19 kms) in the North-East, and by the Republic of Korea (238kms). This meridional frontier is bordered from one side to another by 2km denuclearized zone and is monitored by 1 million soldiers.

¹ ANKIT P., "A Second Trump-Kim Summit Looks Likelier Than Ever", in *The diplomat*, retrieved , September 28, 2018 ; "North Korea agrees to dismantle missile test site as Kim Jong Un, Moon Jae-in sign deal", in *USA today*, retrieved December 30, 2018 ; WANG W., "Trump Praises Human Rights Abuser Kim Jong Un as 'Real Leader'", in *The Bipartisan Press*, retrieved March 3, 2019 ; ZHENHUA L., "Second summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un may be held 'after October'", in *scmp.com*, retrieved September 28, 2018.

The official ideology of the country is based on the self-sufficiency doctrine launched by Kim-il-sung, the founder of the regime. Dead in 1984, Kim-il-sung was succeeded by his son Kim-Jong-un in 2011. This makes North Korea the unique communist dynasty of the history.

North Korea is the most militarized country in the world as regards the number of people enrolled in the armed forces. The country develops a nuclear program and spatial program and is accused of numerous illicit activities at the international level.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR POWER

The DPRK began its nuclear program in the early 1950s. In December 1952, the government established the Atomic Energy Research Institute and the Academy of Sciences, but nuclear work only began to progress when North Korea established cooperation agreements with the Soviet Union assistance. Soviet scientists were sent to help North Korea develop peaceful nuclear energy.

In 1985, North Korea ratified the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but refused to include the IAEA safeguard agreement until 1992. The country was largely noncompliant with the NPT and continued to pursue nuclear weapons.

In 1994, the United States of America and North Korea negotiated the Agreed Framework which would provide North Korea with nuclear energy reactors in exchange for disarmament, but the agreement fell apart in 2002. In 2003, North Korea announced it was withdrawing from NPT. Since then, North Korea has been actively developing and testing nuclear weapons, despite international efforts such as the failed Six Party Talks.

In 2009, North Korea was confirmed to have nuclear weapons by the IAEA. In 2017, North Korea tested two missiles that could possibly reach USA territory.²

² GORDON M.R., "North Korean Missile Site Appears Operational, Images Show", via www.wsj.com, March 7, 2019.

II. 1. Why does North Korea want nuclear weapons?

North Korea views the program as a key legacy of Kim's father and grandfather, and thus, a national crown jewel. Kim sees his arsenal as an essential insurance policy against suffering the fate of Saddam Hussein, Moammar Gadhafi, and the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan in 2001. None of those bad actors survived a nuclear weapon/bomb, and none of them survived war with the USA. To enlarge a bit upon the reasons of developing nuclear weapons, one should say that for North Korea this program guarantees :

- the regime survival by deterring allied attacks or retaliations in response to North Korean provocations ;
- the source of national pride, by achieving equal status with the USA ;
- the domestic legitimacy and internal prestige for the leadership ;
- tremendous military power, overcoming deficits in conventional forces to achieve reunification ;
- formidable leverage for coercive diplomacy, to wrest concessions and benefits ;
- undermining of the USA-South Korea alliance, by sowing doubt that Washington would come to Seoul's defense once the America homeland is under nuclear threat.

II. 2. Steps of Denuclearization

A number of people have tried to think about the steps of the denuclearization of North Korea. I would go for one suggested by Michael E. O'Hanlon that I consider reasonable and more flexible. As a matter of fact, O'Hanlon proposes the following steps³ :

- Freeze testing : a freeze on the testing and production of nuclear weapons and of longer-range missiles as well, as Pyongyang has already done it last year;

³ O'HANLON M.E., "Step by step plan to denuclearize North Korea", retrieved from www.brooking.edu, 2018.

- Cap arsenals : verifiable termination of production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium (the word cap is used to distinguish from the existing freeze on testing since this caps the size of the arsenal) ;
- Dismantle infrastructure : verifiable dismantling of the infrastructure used to produce enriched uranium and plutonium (centrifuges, nuclear reactors, reprocessing facilities) and of longer range missiles (rocket and fuel factories) ;
- Disarm : actual extrication of existing fissile materials and nuclear warheads out of the country- the true denuclearization phase.

II. 3. Challenges

The denuclearization of North Korea will require patience and clearly worked out strategies based of course on the non-violent approaches and incentive-oriented methodology. Why patience-Simply because North Korea needs to be convinced to do so. And convincing them implies giving them the necessary assurance concerning any fear they might have. Also, it should be known that dismantling all the nuclear weapons infrastructure such as the separation of the plutonium infrastructure should be very costly and to gather money for achieving this should require time and willingness from the other stakeholders.

The non-violent approaches would help avoid triggering off a war the consequence of which are unpredictable when one knows that no war is good news. Most importantly, a non-violent strategy should lead to a peaceful denuclearization with less damage "All countries should stick to the general direction of peaceful solutions and push for appropriately resolving nonproliferation hot pot issues by political and diplomatic means', Wu Haitao, the Chinese Deputy Ambassador present to UNSC meeting said.

At the same time, it is crucial that the strategy to adopt presents incentives to North Korea. It goes without saying that many strategies and/or models can be envisaged and submitted. Thus, in our view, the Kazakhstan model of denuclearization would be the ideal one to refer to as far as the North Korea denuclearization is concerned.

III. KAZAKHSTAN AS A MODEL

Kazakhstan has a long and rather tragic history with nuclear weapons. Semipalatinsk, the largest nuclear testing site in the world at the time, was based in Kazakhstan, then part of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) At the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and given the side effects caused by nuclear testing on people's health, Kazakhstan decided to denuclearize totally. The Semipalatinsk site was destroyed with the help of the United States of America that contributed with 100 million US dollars in 2000.

As a matter of fact, by providing North Korea with such an amount of money, the United States of America very welcomed Kazakhstan peaceful, courageous, and beneficial approach for getting rid of the nuclear weapons. As a result, Kazakhstan benefitted from a number of advantages both at the geopolitical levels and the socio-economic levels

III. 1. At the political level

Kazakhstan was elected to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, which is a prestigious position worldwide and its high priority was to make the world free of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, despite the fact that Kazakhstan denuclearize there was no change of political regime. Rather, the regime in place gained international esteem and has remained stable.

In the same vein, Kazakhstan joined the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1994, ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2002, and became party to the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2004.

III. 2. At the socio-economic level

When Kazakhstan committed to denuclearize the United State of America pledge US dollars 100 million to aid the process under the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Cohen (in Maria Gershuni, 2018) argues that the program was a success and Kazakhstan received

immense technical and economic assistance from the United States of America to bear the financial burden of denuclearization.

Kazakhstan is also home to several projects funded by multilateral lending institutions, such as the World Bank, which supports infrastructure and public goods projects in previously underdeveloped areas of Kazakhstan.

In addition, private investment with companies such as Chevron, Exxon, GE, and Boeing are all eager to do business in Kazakhstan.

At the time being, North Korea has been subject to internal economic difficulties, drought, precarious status in the international sphere and it faces internal sanctions. People in North Korea may also be experiencing in one way or another effects of the missiles testing in many aspects. All this is nearly similar to the situation that Kazakhstan experienced at the collapse of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). This being the case, by putting an end to the nuclear weapons and missiles of mass destruction, North Korea should considerably benefit from both the geopolitical and socio-economic levels- the type of advantages gained by Kazakhstan after denuclearization.

III. 3. At the geopolitical level

This regime will certainly see its political prestige going higher than ever before at the international sphere. In the same way, the North Korea leadership will be classified among civilized and respectable figures in the world.

III. 4. At the socio-economic level

Before all, the economic sanctions that have been hanging on North Korea like the sword of Damocles will be lifted and as a result this will allow companies from countries such Russia⁴, China, India, South Korea, say, firms from all the world countries to do business with Pyongyang. In the same vein, North Korea would benefit from immense economic and financial advantages given a proliferation of multilateral lending institutions in the region.

⁴ KRAMER A.E. and SANG-HUN C., "After Meeting Kim Jong-un, Putin Supports North Korea on Nuclear Disarmament", via *NYTimes.com*, retrieved April 27, 2019.

The Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Bank, and the BRICS- run New Development Bank. On top of this, the IMF and the World Bank would be keen to invest and work with a North Korea free of nuclear weapons.

CONCLUSION

The denuclearization of North Korea is a tricky issue to handle. But it can be possible when handle with tact. It requires patience, well designed approaches by the international community and all the stakeholders and willingness by North Korea itself.

As already said, the said denuclearization cannot be expected to take place automatically and smoothly as if nothing could block it. Indeed, a number of prerequisites have to be taken into account to cite but a few: the considerable amount of money that should be needed to destroy all the nuclear infrastructure, the compensation of money invested by North Korea during years to have the program operate and so on

In addition, in terms of ideology, it is not obvious for one to imagine that North Korea would easily accept to denuclearize- It has been shown that for North Korea this program is among other things a national heritage, a tool of deterring any threat from 'enemies' country such as the USA Most importantly, the program is the tool that guarantees the survival of the regime. By taking account of this, the international community and mainly the USA and allies must convince Pyongyang that its regime should not be in danger and it will not collapse once they agree to get rid of nuclear weapons.

They must provide the regime with all the necessary assurance even if pressure might keep being put, given that the ideal is to come to a peaceful denuclearization.

A country like Kazakhstan which has already experienced successful denuclearization should help North Korea to follow their steps. Kazakhstan has the advantage of being a leader of Nonproliferation program in the region and of being, say, in good relations with North Korea. Here, we can cite President Nazarbayev of Kazakhsatn who spoke at the Security Council

meeting by saying ' We have achieved a high international standing specifically by renouncing nuclear weapons and securing nonaggression safeguards from nuclear powers'. He went on to say 'We call upon all other states to follow our examples. We called upon Iran to do so, now we call upon North Korea to do so'

Likewise, both Kazakhstan and South Korea should help create a free nuclear weapons zone in the Korean peninsula

Neighboring countries like South Korea, China, Russia, even Japan should promise to make it possible for North Korea economy to be reintegrated in the regional economic system once it denuclearizes.

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