

POLICY BREFING

The Nuclear issue around China, its international and regional frameworks

Abstract

Atomic energy and nuclear weapons are among the most tangled global issues that the universal organization of the United Nations have to deal with since its creation in 1945.

Efforts to curb the spread of nuclear material and technology began only shortly after the introduction of the destructive potential of atomic weaponry.

Numbers of resolutions and treaties have been made in order to coordinate policies around this matter. Moreover, specific agencies have been created and appointed to work together with United Nations and with the members States.

About this concern, it is possible to mention the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

IAEA, tied to United Nations through an agreement (The texts of the Agency's Agreement with the United Nations), constantly puts efforts into promoting the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies, furthering the establishment of safeguarded worldwide disarmament following the policies given by UN.

Since 1960s, in order to prevent the dangerous spread of nuclear weapons, United Nations launched the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

A nuclear-weapons-free zone (NWFZ) is an agreement defined by the United Nations with similar purposes of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation Weapons; a group of states establish conventions in order to abolish the use and the development of nuclear weapons in a determined area, providing also mechanisms of verification and control that would enforce obligations.

NWFZ works at regional level, differentiating its specific name and specific goals little by little the attention pass all around the globe; the focus in this case will go on the SEANWFZ, the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone's given the attempt to analyse the nuclear question circumscribed to the East, Southeast Asia, and more deeply the nuclear question that goes around China, North-Korea, South-Korea and their relations with USA and the rest of the World.

According to the International Panel on Fissile Materials, United States, United Kingdom, France, and Russia have all declared that they have stopped producing fissile material for nuclear weapons.

It is believed that China also stopped his production of fissile material for nuclear weapons: of highly enriched uranium (HEU) in 1987, and plutonium in 1991 even if information on China's fissile material stocks are not clear and partially have remained a secret.

In the end, a brief chronological analysis of lasts events occurring in the interested troubling area of East Asia, constantly under the nuclear menace of North Korea's dictator Kim Jong-Un in its relations with the transoceanic power of USA.

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Table of contents

1.INTERNATIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK	4
1.0 Nuclear weapons: The role of the United Nations	4
1.1 NPT, CTBT and NWFZ	5
2. REGIONAL DIPLOMACY FOR THE ENERGETIC SECURITY	8
2.0 The nuclear question from a regional point of view: Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones	8
2.1 ASEAN. Focus: SEANWFZ	9
2.2 China in relation with: North Korea, South Korea and USA	10
3.0 CONCLUSION	14
3.1 Nuclear war?	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY/SITOGRAPHY	16

1. INTERNATIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.0 Nuclear weapons: The role of the United Nations

Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous weapons in the whole earth with a very long-term catastrophic effect.

After the terrible disaster of Hiroshima and Nagasaki¹, which shocked the consciences all around the World and let the most awful nightmare of the human real, it became immediately clear that solutions would have been taken in order to guarantee the non-repetition of those events, and real progress may be achieved only after nations have reached an affirmative commitment in order to elimination all weapons of mass destruction.

Disarmament and non-proliferation have been the first challenge that has been taken internationally in order to avoid the possibility of other catastrophes and the United Nations became the standard bearer of this global mission.

*"the General Assembly may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and regulation of armaments"*²

Immediately after its creation, in 1946³ The United States gave birth to a specific Commission⁴: The United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) to deal with problems related to the discovery of atomic energy, make proposals for the control of atomic energy and the elimination from every state's armaments, both the atomic weapons and major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.⁵

In 1952, the General Assembly⁶ created the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) under the Security Council with the aim of preparing proposals for the regulation, limitation and reduction of all armed forces and armaments and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.⁷

In 1978, the first session of the General Assembly around disarmament established a successor Disarmament Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly, composed of all Member States of the United Nations. Deliberative body, it has the function of making recommendations on various issues around disarmament and investigating on the appertaining decisions and recommendations of the special session. A real disarmament regime would require setting international norms, treaty negotiation, enforcement, verification and monitoring, confidence-building measures, transparency, and strengthening regional steps straight to disarmament.

In 1957 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been created in response to the reactions both of apprehension and curiosity generated by the discoveries on the possibility of use of nuclear technology. At its birth there is the name of the U.S. President Eisenhower.^{8 9}

IAEA had and still has two main objectives: to promote and to control the atom.

*"The Agency shall seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. It shall ensure, so far as it is able, that assistance provided by it or at its request or under its supervision or control is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose."*¹⁰

¹ The atomic bombardments of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan were two nuclear attacks operated by the American military aeronautics almost in the end of the Second World War (August 6-9, 1945).

² Article 11 UN Charter

³ Resolution 1, January 24, 1946

⁴ Composed of one representative from each country inside the Security Council and Canada.

⁵ The Acheson–Lilienthal Report was the first important American document that appeared few time before the beginning of the Cold War (March 28, 1946). It expressed the necessity of an international control on nuclear weapons and the elusion of nuclear warfare. Unfortunately, the Report was ignored.

⁶ Resolution 502 (VI), January 1952

⁷ After 1956 it meets only occasionally

⁸ "Atoms for Peace" is the title of the speech delivered by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower to the UN General Assembly and to enlighten the American public on the risks and hopes of a nuclear future in New York on December, 8 1953.

The ideas President expressed in his speech structured the shape of IAEA's Statute, to which 81 nations unanimously approved in October 1956.

⁹ IAEA has two regional offices in Toronto and Tokyo; two liaison offices in New York and Geneva. IAEA also has specialized laboratories in nuclear technology in Vienna and Monaco.

¹⁰ Article II of the IAEA Statute

The enhanced capabilities of the IAEA's Safeguards Analytical Laboratories have strengthened the IAEA's ability to conduct timely and independent analyses of nuclear material samples and ensure quality control to maintain confidence in analytical findings used for safeguards purposes; for example, an inspection team in December 2002 discovered the Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme in the early 1990s and this has been followed by a substantial strengthening of the effectiveness of IAEA safeguards.

Safeguards inspectors play an important role in the global non-proliferation regime, carrying out verification activities under safeguards agreements at locations all around the world.

In 2011 IAEA recalled for an implementation in the Action Plan after the Fukushima-Daiichi disaster power due to the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami. Radioactive material was released from the damaged plant and tens of thousands of people were evacuated¹¹ and improvement in nuclear safety has been taken after five days discussions.

In July 7, 2017¹², for the first time in history, nuclear weapons have been declared outlaw.

The United Nations have formally adopted an essay that prohibits their use. Nuclear weapons, in fact, were the only ones of mass destruction that didn't have a specific document that forbid them. This represents a landmark in the aim of letting humanity and planet free from the threat constituted by the nuclear weapons.¹³

The Treaty is the result of big international campaign promoted by International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).¹⁴

Heart of the document is the article 1 which forbid *"to develop, to make a will, to produce, to acquire, to possess but also to transfer or to receive the transfer, to allow the removal of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices"*. Furthermore, it prohibits *"to encourage, to induce, to assist or to receive assistance for one any of the above-mentioned activities."*¹⁵ Also, the menace of the use it is forbidden.

The essay has been approved from 122 countries. USA, France and UK stood opposite, defining the document "blind" on international menace to security and unattainable. Big absents have been the 9 nuclear powers¹⁶, Italy and also Japan, although hit from the huge disaster of the atomic bomb during II World War. After the tensions between USA and North-Korea, the document arrives in a moment in which the world is again submitted to a concrete threat.

The Treaty will enter into force after 50 countries would have ratified it.

1.1 NPT, CTBT and NWFZ

Milestone inside the complex nuclear armament regulation system is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Signed July 1st, 1968¹⁷, NPT set the basis for the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, mainly basing on 3 pillars:

1. Limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons
2. Disarmament
3. Allow the pacific development of the nuclear energy

191 States joined the NPT, including also the five nuclear-weapon States (China, France, UK, USA, Russia). IAEA through its developed safeguard system, monitors the regular application of the Treaty, constantly verifying that between adherent Members there wouldn't be controversy in the use of nuclear energy.

¹¹ Worst civilian nuclear accident since Chernobyl accident in 1986.

¹² UN Headquarters in New York.

¹³ The first resolution of the General Assembly on this theme in January, 1946 set the objective "to eliminate the nuclear devices from the national armaments."

¹⁴ Coalition of non-governmental organizations presents in one hundred countries which promote the adherence to and implementation of the United Nations nuclear weapon ban treaty. ICAN began its work in 2007 in Australia.

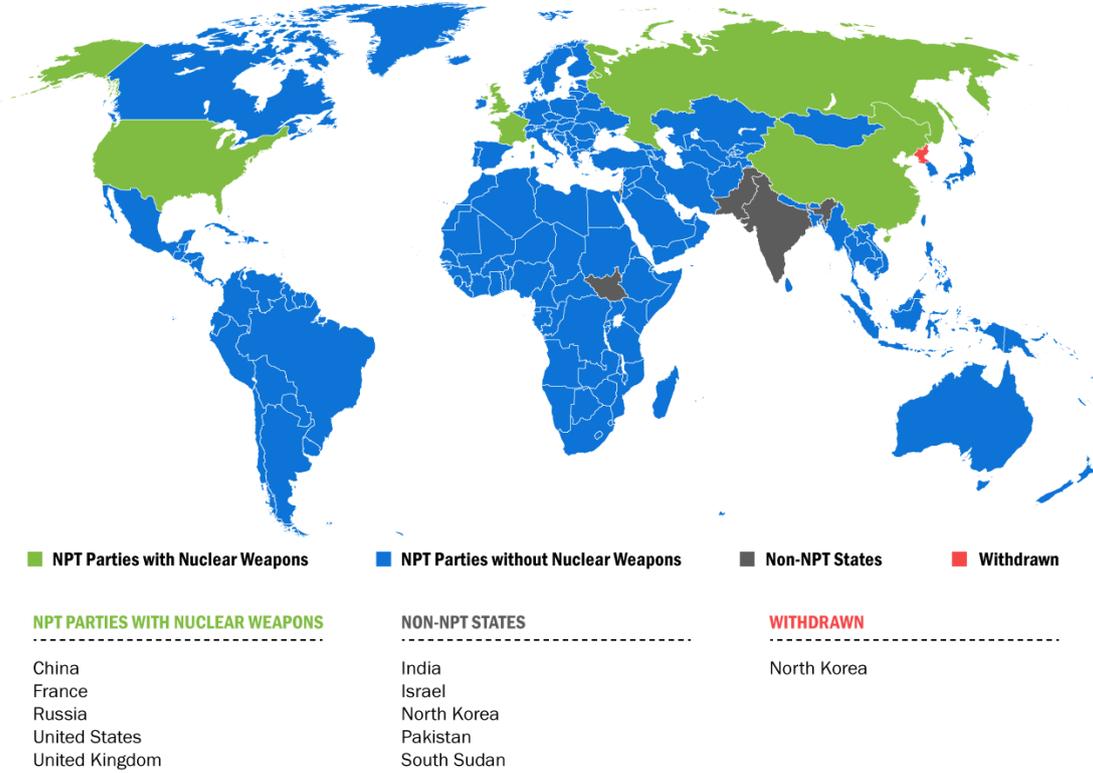
¹⁵ Article 1 of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

¹⁶ Russia, USA, France, China, UK, India, Pakistan, Israel and North-Korea.

¹⁷ Entered into force in 1970.

IAEA is allowed to make inspections thanks to bilateral accords taken between the Agency and the States. The operation of the Treaty has to be reviewed every 5 years.¹⁸

Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty



Source: <http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt>

BROOKINGS

Figure 1. Worldwide parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Brookings, Washington DC

Between the other multilateral Treaties on nuclear weapons and denuclearization, we can find also Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, CTBT, 1996.

The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty¹⁹ aims to ban all nuclear explosions, both for civilian and military purposes.

CTBT has been discussed inside the Disarmament Commission and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 10, 1996 but yet in 2018 hasn't entered into force, due to the lack of minimum number of ratifications forecasted.²⁰ For the entering into force it's necessary the ratify from the 44 countries listed in the Annex 2, namely those countries which formally participated in the 1996 Conference on Disarmament and that hold the nuclear technology. Five countries between them still didn't ratify: China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, USA. Three, didn't even sign: India, Pakistan and North-Korea.

¹⁸ Article VIII, paragraph 3 of the Treaty

¹⁹ Created on the basis given by the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), 1963.

²⁰ the CTBT will enter into force after it has been signed and ratified by the 44 States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty, i.e. the States that had nuclear power or research reactors at the time (see image) and page 6.

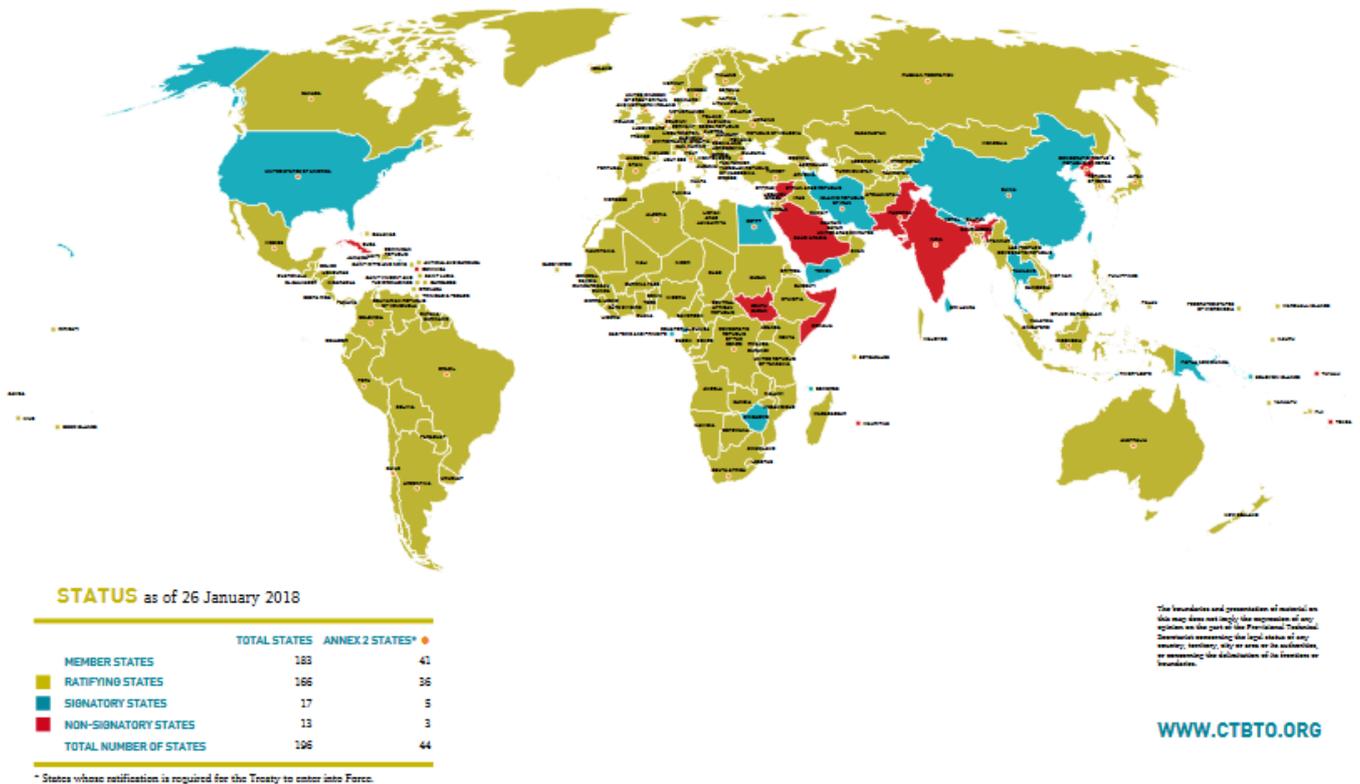


Figure 2. Status of the CTBT, Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-ban Treaty Organization, Vienna

CTBT gave the chance to establish an institutionalized international norm on nuclear testing.

Problems arose because three non-signatories haven't observed CTBT: in fact, nuclear tests have been made by India and Pakistan in 1998 and, in 2006, 2009 and 2013 also the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) made forbidden nuclear tests which brought to a universal condemnation including high sanctions given by the U.N. Security Council. The Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), was created together with the Treaty; its mandate is the establishment of the CTBT's verification and the promotion of signatures and ratifications of the Treaty with the will of putting it into force.

In September 2017 the international community proposed the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) in order to prohibit the production of the two main components of nuclear weapons: highly-enriched uranium (HEU), and plutonium. This admirable purpose would give positive perspectives both in the field of non-proliferation as well as disarmament.

Unfortunately, the treaty has not been negotiated and its terms remain to be defined.

By the time, inside the huge and ambitious disarmament process there have been drafted also the so called Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ), envisaged by article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty²¹, the aim: the complete nuclear disarmament by all member states.

These NWFZ include:

- the Antarctic Treaty (Antartic)
- the Tlatelolco Treaty (Latin America and Caribbean)
- the Pelindaba Treaty (Africa)
- the Rarotonga Treaty (South Pacific)

²¹ "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

- the Bangkok Treaty (ASEAN)



Figure 3. Map of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zones Areas, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, UNODA, New York.

NWFZ is an agreement that has been created by the United States in order to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms at a regional level. In fact, every Treaty covers a specific geographical and geopolitical area. NWFZ doesn't cover seas or the transit of nuclear missiles in the space. The most difficult obstacles in eliminating weapons of mass destruction are the regional tensions within East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

2. REGIONAL DIPLOMACY FOR THE ENERGETIC SECURITY

2.0 The nuclear question from a regional point of view: Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

The General Assembly in defining a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone:

“any zone recognized as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which any group of States, in the free exercises of their sovereignty, has established by virtue of a treaty or convention whereby:

- *The statute of total absence of nuclear weapons to which the zone shall be subject, including the procedure for the delimitation of the zone, is defined;*
- *An international system of verification and control is established to guarantee compliance with the obligations deriving from that statute”²²*

²² UNGA Resolution 3472 B (1975).

Disarmament goes hand in hand with confidence-building, the reduction of military tensions and maintenance and enhancement of regional and international peace and security.

NWFZs are defined by the United Nations as “*freely established*”, this to stress the voluntary research and non-forced will of every geopolitical and geographical zone to put together their forces in order to create a more safe and liveable world. The nuclear weapon state present in the NWFZ must follow negotiations and do not use nuclear weapons against other States Parties in the treaty. Thus, nuclear weapon states should promote the use and the development of technology in such path for peace purposes, allowing cooperation for peace. Unfortunately, despite good promises and efforts, goals are not always really achievable.

2.1 ASEAN. Focus: SEANWFZ

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)²³ was established on August 8, 1967 in Bangkok, (Thailand), under the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (or Bangkok Declaration) by founding members: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

After, also Vietnam, Myanmar, Brunei, Cambodia joined the Association.

From 2017 also Timor Est is part of regional forum.

The promotion of common efforts, equality, coordination, social cultural and economic development, together with the compliance of justice, the respect of the UN Chart and the promotion of stability and peace are between the main goals of the Association, which also stress in maintain strong cooperation and mutual advantages with regional and international organizations. The desire of implementation and growth led to the creation of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) in 1997, which include the nations of China, Japan, and South Korea with the aim of guarantee financial stability in Asia.

The South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty entered into force on March 27, 1997²⁴ when Cambodia joined the Bangkok Declaration. Bangkok Treaty is the other name of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

The Treaty requires each state party not to “*develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons; station or transport nuclear weapons by any means; or test or use nuclear weapons.*”²⁵

Of course, States Parties are obliged not to take any action to assist or encourage the manufacture or acquisition of any nuclear explosive device by any state. The Treaty also declares outlaws the dumping of radioactive waste and materials in the zone, and asks all states to guarantee full scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards over their nuclear facilities. SEANWFZ has a Commission which is composed of the foreign ministers of the 10 ASEAN; their work consists in overseeing the implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty, that hasn’t been signed by the Nuclear Powers.

Plan of Action (previously adopted in 2013) of the SEANWFZ has been implemented in August 2017 after a reunion of the ASEAN Commission after a discussion on the rising tensions in the Korean. To North Korea has been urged to immediately comply fully with its obligations under all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

²³ Headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia.

²⁴ signed on December 15, 1995 at the fifth Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit.

²⁵ (art 3.1) of the Treaty.

2.2 China in relation with: North Korea, South Korea and USA

The Popular Republic of China is nowadays a super power on the political and economic path in its region. Its foreign policy reached a global dimension developing through the regional relations' enforcement, the access on sources, the strong opposition to American hegemony and the creation of strategic plan toward its neighboring countries. China had the chance to take advantages of the globalization, becoming one of the first beneficiaries of foreign investments and the favourite place where enterprises delocalized their manufacturing productions, since emerging as the driving economic country of Asia. In last years, China tried to enforce its economic and political relations with its neighboring countries, especially with Japan and South-Korea. Relations with America are characterized by commercial infiltration although the different policies. For example, crucial is the situation of Taiwan.²⁶ China is both one of the biggest producer and consumer of energy all over the world. With its huge population that overcome 1,3 billion of inhabitants, the country is the first energy's consumer in the world reaching, since 2010, almost the 25% of the global consume and a solid financial position and growing influence inside the international commerce.²⁷ Although China is increasingly diversifying its energy mix, it has 38 nuclear power reactors in operation and utilize the 28% of nuclear energy; IEA²⁸ stated that since 2012, China has been the country with the largest installed power capacity.²⁹ China own nuclear weapons since 50s and is one of the nuclear power that didn't participate to the July 2017 establishment of the outlaws of nuclear weapons and this is a key point if we consider the strong power and influence this country has both inside its regional framework and all over the world.³⁰ Nuclear power has an important role in a developed and still developing country like this. It clearly seems that China isn't willing to renounce to its potential.

North-Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), is probably one of the most repressive regime at this time; given the closed nature, it is almost impossible to reach any kind of information on how attitudes have changed in time, both for people and for political behaviour. The country is connected with the rest of the world only through one tv channel, one source of official news for the print and broadcast media (Korean Central News Agency) and one official newspaper (Rodong Simun). North Korea acceded in 1985 in the NPT, but never came into compliance. The country announced its withdrawal in 2003, following the detonation of nuclear devices in violation of the core obligations of the Treaty. This country is now the most dangerous menace in the world. Kim Jong-Un's program has always been clear since his coronation in 2011. What he wants to destroy is what he calls the "*capitalism virus*", and the "auto conservation of the country" is the first weapon he must use in defending his country. Probably his attempt, as post-communist country, is trying not to be the new "East Germany", eaten by the "West Germany capitalism". Yet in his first discourse in 2011, he clearly declared that he doesn't want to end in the same way as Muammar Ghedaffi³¹, who renounced to his nuclear and chemical arsenal showing to be prepared to every collaboration with the west and then killed. The Kim dynasty always be addicted to nuclear power and nuclear weapons; by the time, the country involved and financed many scientists to work for creating more technological and powerful devices. Most recently forbidden nuclear tests have been in July 4, 2017 when North Korea launched Hwasong-14, a mobile intercontinental ballistic missile, in September 15, 2017, when another device has been launched from Pyongyang's airport and flew over the island of Hokkaido. The missile (medium range) has flown for 3700 kilometres long reaching 770 kilometres of height: it could have reach also the American base of Guam.³²

²⁶ The United States took on responsibility to protect Taiwan from an invasion or coercive Chinese actions, "Taiwan Relations Act".

²⁷ Politiche internazionali su energia e cambiamenti climatici M.Melani, Eurilink, 1° ed., 2015.

²⁸ International Energy Agency, Paris; it follows topic like energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide.

²⁹ World Energy Outlook 2017: China, November 14, 2017.

³⁰ Politiche internazionali su energia e cambiamenti climatici M.Melani, Eurilink, 1° ed., 2015.

³¹ Libyan revolutionary, politician, and political theorist in office from 1969 to 2011.

³² Island part of the Marianne's under the American Law.



Figure 4. Guam Island. Checkpoint on the Pacific and historically outpost in exchanges between USA and Asia, the military base represents a strategic point of the American military strength, image taken from: <http://www.vietatoparlare.it/>.

North Korea undergo many sanctions and admonition from the international community, but all those reprimands haven't been enough. In fact, in USA president Donald Trump's opinion, diplomatic answers are not sufficient. Further and stronger measures have been asked to the international community beyond the sanctions already adopted by the Security Council. North-Korea is clearly a real "threat".

On November 29, at 2:47 a.m. local time, North Korea carried out the launch of what its largest and most powerful ballistic missile, the Hwasong-15 intercontinental-range. It performed better than the fired in July, and exhibited a potential range of more than 8,000 miles, able to reach Washington or any other part of the continental United States.³³ This missile is designed to deliver precisely that kind of weapon to targets.

After this event, in December 22, 2017 North Korea received the third sanction in one year by the 15-members United Nations Security Council. This time also China and Russia joined the vote.³⁴ The decision taken aims to reduce the nation's petrol imports by up to 90%, including a ban on exports of North Korean goods. In August 2017, the resolution taken blocked North Korean exports of coal, iron, iron ore, lead, lead ore and seafood, and in September, it blocked textile exports, curbed oil imports.³⁵

Kim answered on 24 December, 2017, that the last decision is an "act of war".³⁶ A UN report esteemed that the country by the way continued exporting banned commodities for an amount of at least \$200m (£141m), "thanks to" the participation and the evasions techniques shared with China, Russia and Malaysia.³⁷

China is divided from **North Korea** by the Tumen River, and is the first country in the gateway for thousands North Korean escaping from the creepy regime.³⁸ In December a leaked internal document let the world know that China quite was creating a specific plan³⁹ for refugee camps in the villages of Changbai, in the cities of Tumen and Hunchun, and in two cities in the north-eastern border province of Jilin.⁴⁰

The China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang denied the presence of such plan.

North Korea is totally dependent on imports from China, which always proclaimed itself shocked from Kim Jon-Un behaviour, but always choosing not to impose too much punitive sanctions, on the contrary, continuing its trade with the banned country. The position of China toward the nuclear menace of North Korea is very controversial under everybody's eyes; is this because of the fear of causing a total collapse that would end with an inexorable refugees flooding?⁴¹

³³ The new has been confirmed by the USA defence secretary James Mattis.

³⁴ North Korea: UN imposes fresh sanctions over missile tests, BBC, December 23, 2017.

³⁵ Gladstone, R. and Sangerdec, D. E., Security Council Tightens Economic Vise on North Korea, Blocking Fuel, Ships and Workers, The New York Times, December 22, 2017.

³⁶ Goldman, R., North Korea Calls U.N. Sanctions an 'Act of War', The New York Times, December 4, 2017.

³⁷ North Korea made \$200m flouting sanctions, UN told, BBC, February 3rd, 2018.

³⁸ The China-North Korea border is 1,420 kilometres long where Dandong city (Chinese) is only separated by a bridge from the first North Korean city: Sinuiju.

³⁹ "The China Mobile" document is the name of the plan for at least five refugee camps in Jilin province.

⁴⁰ Phillips, T., China building network of refugee camps along border with North Korea, The Guardian, December 12, 2017.

⁴¹ Perlez, J., Fearing the Worst, China Plans Refugee Camps on North Korean Border, The New York Times, December 11, 2017.

Or is because, in the end, China and North Korea are strictly tied by their communist ideology? Where, destroying North Korea would mean destroying probably the last ally? Funny to see how the bridge which connects the two countries has been called.

Figure 5. The “Friendship” Bridge, which bring from China to North Korea, GREG BAKER/AFP/Getty Images.



Tensions on the Korean peninsula remained extremely high throughout all 2017, as North Korea completed a series of nuclear tests and missile launches designed to demonstrate its nuclear capability. In order to avoid the possibility of a conflict toward Asia, although the frosted relations⁴², *China* and *South Korea* met on December 14, 2017 in Beijing. China and South Korea finally decided to work together in order to rebalance their bilateral relations and to denuclearize the peninsula.

The hope around the visit was based on the possibility to solidify the foundations of a new era in the relationships among the two countries on the base of the friendship of the mutual trust. Of course, Beijing and Seoul have the common interest to maintain the peace in the Korean peninsula, and since the beginning of November 2017, China launched first signals of surrender after years of hostilities.⁴³ China’s proposal of “freeze-for-freeze”⁴⁴ didn’t receive approval from South Korea. Moon asked Xi to attend the opening ceremony of the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, in February. This because due to Kim’s nuclear weapon tests, tickets purchase collapsed; on the contrary, having Chinese presence during Winter Games would guarantee presences.⁴⁵

The beginning of the relations between *China* and *USA*’s new president had a bitter taste.

Donald Trump strongly criticized China and its taxes on products that would have destroyed – in Trump’s opinion – job places in America and the “one China policy”⁴⁶, worrying Beijing very much.

The recognition of this principle is the presupposition for China to create relationships with the rest of the world. Furthermore, Donald Trump also accused Beijing not to collaborate in the path of the regional security against the North-Korean menace and for maintaining an ambiguous balanced position.

In November 2017 from 5 to 12, USA President Donald Trump flew in Asia visiting five countries (Japan, South-Korea, China, Vietnam, Philippines) not only for participating to the 50th anniversary of ASEAN, and to the forum held by the head of the states of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) but, primarily, to discuss the troubling nuclear situation in North-Korea and to remake the United States’ position in the world.⁴⁷ Trump used grave tones in talking about *North Korea* during his time in Asia, hoping that countries like China, South-Korea and Japan, although potential differences and approaches, would work together against their common “enemy”. During his permanence in South Korea, Trump warned North Korea not to try the United States, arguing that any strike against the United States or its allies would be a “*fatal miscalculation*.” Trump asked to South Korea an alliance in trade and a support in order to fight Pyongyang intentions. America is trying, not successfully, to put coercion over North Korea’s coercion, apparently not being able to find real and transparent affinity with Asian countries.

⁴² South Korea is an historical American ally and own on its ground military and missiles American basis. Thus, China fears and always had a tough position on the Thaad positioned in the South Korea’s soil.

⁴³ Perlez, J., South Korea’s Leader, Meeting Xi Jinping, Seeks ‘New Start’ With China, The New York Times, December 14, 2017.

⁴⁴ North Korea would freeze its nuclear weapons program in return for the United States and South Korea halting their military exercises around the Korean Peninsula.

⁴⁵ Perlez, J., South Korea’s Leader, Meeting Xi Jinping, Seeks ‘New Start’ With China, The New York Times, December 14, 2017.

⁴⁶ The “One China principle” is the principle that insists both Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single “China”.

⁴⁷ Glosserman, B., “Disrupter-in-chief” goes to Asia: Whither US-Pacific strategy ?, ISPI, 02 November 2017.

Pressures on China gave some results as the sanctions applied after the last ballistic test, but haven't change the interest that China has into maintaining a buffer between itself and the American militarily-friendly other Korea.

The new year began with a controversial issue given by North Korea: the creepy menace of a presumed big nuclear button against America on one hand, and on the other, the opening towards South Korea.

On Monday January 1st, 2018 Kim Jong-Un in giving his 2018 New Year's Day discourse, celebrated the successful conclusion of North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, adding and delivering to Trump the update that he had a "*nuclear button*" physically installed on his desk in his office and ready to be pushed. Right away, Trump didn't lose occasion to answer with his special weapon: boasting on twitter against his "*sick puppy*"⁴⁸ Kim.⁴⁹ Since the beginning of Trump's presidency, menaces, insults and tweets have been principle mean of communication between the two leaders.

Beyond his "nuclear button," Kim Jong-Un's expressed a revolutionary desire: taking part of the February South Korean's Winter Game. He appeared open in sending a North Korean delegation which will be hosted by South Korea at Pyeongchang in February 2018; proposal, already done in November 2017, when the South Korean President Moon Jae-in, in the pursuit of engagement with the North, called for North Korea's participation said "*I hope that North Korea will also participate, which will provide a very good opportunity for inter-Korean peace and reconciliation*".⁵⁰ The two Koreas have agreed both to march together in the opening ceremony of the Olympics and to form a unified women's ice hockey team, that will be the first in history. North Korea promised to send a delegation in support of the North Korean 22 athletes, artists and also a taekwondo team.

Winter Games represents now, at the beginning of this new year, the best chance to ease political and nuclear tensions and a symbol of peace. Hopefully, maybe the first sign of detente.

The meeting has been organized by the South Korean Ministry for the Unification Cho Myung-Gyun.

He also proposed to discuss for the next month, February, the reconciliation of those families that have been divided after the definition of the two countries border in the armistice of 1953.⁵¹

Many South Korean civilians expressed worries about this proposal, hoping that Winter Games would not be the Trojan horse for Pyongyang.

Tuesday January 9, 2018 North Korea confirmed its presence in the Winter Games. This decision is seen as "*a great step forward*" in the Olympic Community⁵². But beside this strong diplomatic action taken by Kim, it's impossible to deny that there is the spreading fear of some probable provocative behaviours of the North Korean athletes during the playing, or, at worst, the fear of a repetition of the terrible attacks during last South Korea Games.⁵³ Worries are understandable, but the participation of North Koreans the event could abate the threat.⁵⁴ In fact, on January 13 and 16, two false alarms warning of an incoming "ballistic missile threat" from North Korea has been sent: the first in Japan and the second in Hawaii. Immediately the two updates have been deleted and public apologies have been issued to the population⁵⁵, but this has increased doubts and fears in the region.

On January 16, 2018, 20 foreign ministers from 20 nations held a meeting in Vancouver to the "Vancouver Talks" in regard to North Korea's nuclear program. Diplomats urged China and Russia, not present at the summit, to implement United Nations sanctions against North Korea.

⁴⁸ Name used in referring to the North Korean Dictator Kim Jong-Un by USA President Donald Trump. Shear, M. D., Trump Boasts of 'Very Good Relationship' With North Korean Leader, The New York Times, January 11, 2018.

⁴⁹ Collins, G., My Button's Bigger Than Yours, The New York Times, January 3rd, 2018.

⁵⁰ Panda, A., 3 Takeaways from Kim Jong-un's 2018 New Year's Address, The Diplomat, January 01, 2018.

⁵¹ Billions of people have been divided in the Peninsula, lots of them died for trying to reach their families on the other side of the border.

⁵² Thomas Bach in a interview as president of the International Olympic Committee.

⁵³ Ten months before the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, North Korea placed a bomb aboard a Korean Air flight and killed all 115 aboard, then North Korea boycotted those Games. After, during soccer's 2002 World Cup held in South Korea, North Korea provoked a naval skirmish on the day that South Korea played the match.

⁵⁴ Longman, J., North Korea Makes Peace with the Olympics, The New York Times, January 9, 2018.

⁵⁵ Wakatsuki, Y., and Masters, J., Japanese broadcaster apologizes after false North Korea missile alert, CNN, January 17, 2018.

*“During the November tests 152,110 people on 716 international flights could have been put in danger”.*⁵⁶

The effectiveness of sanctions must be improved. A phone call between President Xi Jinping and Trump underline how efforts must be done in order to maintain this, hopefully, this pacific moment which started after the declaration of Kim about Olympics. The ambiguous position of China has been remarked in conclusion of the summit. *“It's China and Russia who would be the biggest violators in terms of what we've seen by way of transfers at sea of oils involving North Korean ships”*⁵⁷

On January 22, 2018 South Korean protesters burned a portrait of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-Un, during the visit of the head of a North Korean art troupe Hyon in Seoul. South Korea will fully pay the visit of all North Korean artists and this is not easily acceptable between the South Koreans.

While continuing in sending athletes to Seoul, Kim Jong-Un also declared that must be held on February 8, the day before the opening of Winter Olympics, in Pyongyang, a parade. North Korea again won't miss the opportunity to honour its army showing its force and for commemorating the country's new Army Building Day, usually celebrated on April 25, but in this case, early to the effective date of the birth of foundation of the Army in its 70th anniversary. South Korean officials of course expressed the need of being prepared for such a parade, seen as a provocation⁵⁸. About the North Korean participation to Winter Games, Taro Kono Japan's foreign minister said that it would not lead to a softening of international resolve against Kim's nuclear program. If North Korean plan is to ingratiate itself to the rest of the world and “to buy time”, this wouldn't work. Pressures on Kim will probably continue.

The first formal talks in two years between the two Korean seems having now eased anger and tensions. Will see how the Winter Games will develop and influence the regional and international framework.

3.CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Nuclear war?

Climate change, terrorism and a potential nuclear war are the main troubled issues worldwide at the moment. North Korean's nuclear issue seems does not have any political solution actually, or maybe, there is not the willingness to seek solutions or work on a real implementation.

The boycott of some big countries at July 7, 2017 total banning of nuclear weapon is alarming.

USA and Russia together own the 93% of the world's nuclear arsenal and they still invests on research and improvement on their weapons.⁵⁹ The HuffPost⁶⁰ gave some anticipations on the USA February “nuclear posture review” which aim is to explain how and for what is worth use nuclear weapons. USA yet have 4,000 nuclear weapons in active stockpile, *“which is more than enough to destroy the world many times over”*.⁶¹ It seems that every country has its own “good” purpose in owning a weapon of mass destruction.

And it is necessary to remember that there are not only nuclear weapons.

Maybe worst enemies are waiting for humans: biological weapon and E-bomb.⁶² In an era where we are totally dependent on power, electromagnetic bomb can provoke an automatic stop of every electrical devices: people could die from exposure, food would spoil, hospital could not work anymore. If lights are off, everything will be off.

Italy and South Korea are vassals and pedestal for USA's weapons basis, North Korea takes any occasion for boasting its improvement in weaponry, Russia quietly continues in strengthening its arsenal.

Our future lays in the hands of heads of States which think that war is a game on twittering and on

⁵⁶ U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at the Vancouver Talks.

⁵⁷ Noerper told VOA in, Gaouette, N., Koran L., Tillerson vows allies won't ease up on North Korea pressure, CNN, January 16, 2018.

⁵⁸ Winter Olympics: North Korea presses ahead with military parade, BBC, February 3rd. 2018.

⁵⁹ Tramballi, U., Bottoni nucleari. Parte seconda, ISPI, January 19, 2018.

⁶⁰ Feinberg, A., Exclusive: Here Is A Draft Of Trump's Nuclear Review. He Wants A Lot More Nukes, The HuffPost, November 1st, 2017.

⁶¹ Alexandra Bell, former senior adviser at the State Department and current senior policy director at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

⁶² Electromagnetic impulse has been observed since 1960s during nuclear experiments. During detonations huge generation of a strong electromagnetic impulse has been observed, which propagated in all the directions as a wave and with an intensity that initially has been underestimated.

provocations, where the five nuclear powers are the same countries making part of the Security Council which own the veto's power and where everybody under its "New World Order" hide the claim for governing the world using the nuclear menace. It's like a dog biting its tail and United Nations seem not to have enough authority.

The growing military capabilities of Asian nuclear power in the mass destruction weapons path seems to constitute the distinctive style of our era. The diffusion of nuclear weapons in Asia not only has a meaningful impact on the regional equilibrium but, given the increasing importance of Asia in the international system, also on global safety. The new global order of the second nuclear era cannot ignore the arise of the new Asian big countries and cannot forget their direct involvement in the construction of an effective safety system. The Korean peninsula was divided after World War II, after then, the communist North developed into a Nearly-Stalinist dictatorship. Isolated on the global stage, its leaders though that nuclear capabilities could be the only deterrent against the outside. Attempts to negotiate aid-for-disarmament deals have repeatedly failed, and throughout 2017 Kim Jong-Un ordered a series of incendiary ballistic missile tests. In response the UN has implemented increasingly tough sanctions.

Donald Trump is the fourth American president that swore to stop the North Korean's nuclear program. Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barak Obama all tried to temper with economic sanctions, menaces and pressures on China, but at the same time, allowing North Korean to buy nuclear technologies from neighbouring countries. The result is that since 1984 all "Kims" realised a military escalation. Kim Jong-Un revealed to be a capable political figure, always being able to maintain strong balanced relations with the powerful China even though and regardless all the international sanctions.

American military actions against North Korea is unthinkable, the counterattack from Pyongyang could be extreme. North Korea is unlikely to end its development of ballistic missile technology now, and tensions on the Korean Peninsula over concerns about a possible war have escalated in the year since the Trump administration took office. President Trump has threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea. Its leader, Kim Jong-un, has threatened to strike the United States with a "nuclear sword of justice." South Korea talks about reconciliation, but costs are high, and there are strong interests in maintaining on their lands USA basis.

China, although many resolutions, maintain its position of stability, and the hostility towards Washington continue to be palpable.

North Korea represents a mix of Marxism and Leninism, is a strong autarchic country, a misleading shop window of the regime: smartphone, skyscrapers, discipline and no pity. It is possible to say that we are now living a new Cold War. But, American efforts on the Asian soils are being enforced in a context completely different from the "previous Cold War".

First, there is not the presence of two distinct blocs. Instead, in the Asian area there is a contraposition of different blocs, all important both for economics and demography like China, Russia, Japan, India, which cooperate and the same time compete, in the pursuing of influence's improvement in the neighbourhood. Second, strategic decisions are made in an era in which politics is strongly melted with economics. China and North Korea seem to be the modern USSR and East Germany, apparently not willing to let the communist model fall. North Korea, affirming to don't wanting to follow the one of the former Soviet Union, East Germany, and Ghedaffi, made a strong action of reverse in wanting to participate to Winter Games, maybe to get sanctions eased and to reduce the chances of American military action, or maybe, because a desirable cease-fire. The first days of 2018, however, give cautious cause for optimism, but it's necessary to be clear-eyed about North Korea's motivations for participating, which could bring to the most realized thaw in years but at the same time, to the hugest disaster of the history.

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