

MYTH OR TRUTH? AN ANALYSES OVER NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR DETERRENCE CAPABILITY AND THE REAL POLICY OF THE USA ABOUT NORTHEAST ASIA

INTRODUCTION

“Only the dead have seen the end of the war” Plato

We all like to watch movies, especially the Hollywood movies. The special effects that are used in the movies make us to watch them. The action movies with expensive special effects make us feel as if we are acting in those movies, like we are the headliner of them. For example, the nuclear war movies, such as “The Sum of All Fears” (2002), “Right at Your Door” (2006), “The Fourth Protocol” (1987), “The Terminator” (1984,1994,2003,2009,2016), “The Day After” (1983), “By Dawn’s Early Light” (1990) and the list goes on. The main idea of these movies is that a nuclear war may break out any moment due to adversaries of USA. We all have to be ready for a nuclear war and in order to prevent a nuclear war USA and its top allies should possess nuclear weapons, so the enemy nations can not dare to start a nuclear war. The audience, who are at the same time the citizens of USA and its allies, feel frightened about the consequences of a nuclear war and they let their governments to possess both weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and conventional weapons. The USA seeks to use nuclear threat to deter a nuclear attack against its cities and for its allies. So, the governments invest in military industry, which is a very lucrative industry in the last decades such as in the USA (<http://www.businessinsider.com/defense-industry-third-quarter-earnings-2016-10>, 24.05.2018). The arms trade has reached an unbelievable rate across the world (<http://www.globalissues.org/article/74/the-arms-trade-is-big-business>, 24.05.2018).

Of course, the film makers and the governments rely on the actual events. Two examples will be enough, the Cuban nuclear crisis and the ongoing North Korean nuclear crisis. In this thesis, the nuclear deterrence of North Korea and the real politics of USA regarding Northeast Asia will be examined. After I had done

research about my thesis, I figured out that mostly Chinese has done a great amount of research about Russian, Chinese and Japanese politics in the region and the behavior of North Korea, and to some extent American scientists. But as for media research, the US media has a great amount of impact on the policies of the region and North Korea. During my research, I did media scanning of which are from US, Chinese, Japan, North Korean, Turkish and English origin. The articles and books about my thesis are mostly Chinese and US origin. As a result, in Turkey, as well as Europe, the topic seems to be insignificant maybe due to the events that occur in the Middle East. Due to the lack of European and Turkish study about the interests of US for the region, my aim is to give a different perspective for Chinese, Russian and US policies and strategies over North Korea and North Korean nuclear power which is a threat for the world.

After the WW2, the world was divided into two major polars. One polar, which is leaded by USA, was the capitalist bloc and the other one, which is leaded by Soviet Union, was the communist bloc. This era called the Cold war and lasted in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed. During the Cold War, the major adversary for USA and its allies was Soviet Union and its communist allies. What happens if we look at the other side of the mirror? Can it be said that an adversary was to be created both gain and keep going the world leadership and put the world into the shape which is appropriate for US policies? But as we all know that a government cannot maintain its administration unless the public's hearts and minds are gained. To win the hearts and minds, an administration should serve well enough for its citizens' welfare and inject fear in citizens' hearts and minds so that the administration maintains and make money (for example, via arms trade).

As for 2018 the adversary has both changed and unchanged. Changed because the major adversary for USA and its allies are terrorist organizations and countries like Iran and North Korea, which have the nuclear capability. Unchanged because, Russia and China are still opponent, if not a rival, in terms of economy and regional leadership. The US grand strategy to block Russian and Chinese influence in the world is still in progress. What needed for this is to control both countries. As known the US military is the golden key for implementation US strategies across the world. So, US military should be used for Russia and China. Of course, the

possibility of a hot war between those countries is almost zero. But still the US military is seen a great threat by Russia and China. Needless to say that an adversary is needed. So, why an adversary is needed for US grand strategy in the Far East Asia? After cold war two thesis were appeared. According to one thesis, given the Warsaw Pact had been abandoned in August 1st, 1991, NATO should come to an end, but according the other thesis, given the uncertainty of ex-Soviet soil and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the rising terrorism across the world, NATO should keep going stronger than ever (Purtaş,8). The adversary is not only Iraq but also Afghanistan and North Korea which are appropriate adversaries for USA. After 9/11 attacks, US President George W. Bush declared Afghanistan as a base for terrorist attacks against US soil and ordered to strike against al-Qaeda terrorist camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (<https://abcnews.go.com/US/us-involved-afghanistan-difficult/story?id=49341264>, 15.07.2018).

When looked at from US side, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and Yemen are of top priority for US strategic interests. So, USA has found the right to engage the terrorism across the world (<http://orsam.org.tr/orsam/gencorsam/11472?dil=tr>, 15.07.2018). In January 2002, US President George Bush identified Iraq, Iran, Syria and North Korea as the "Axis of Evil" and US administration has declared that USA would recognize the governments whom are connected with terrorist organizations as the primary target (<http://orsam.org.tr/orsam/gencorsam/11472?dil=tr>, 15.07.2018). As USA has been working on to improve its influence over the region, North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile trials and threatening actions have become an obstacle for US interests. Therefore, USA has increased its naval presence and it can be said that USA has been applying containment policy towards China (<https://www.diplomatikstrateji.com/asyada-guc-savaslari-menzili-buyuyen-tehdit-kuzey-kore/>, 15.07.2018). So, North Korea has become an appropriate adversary for USA. North Korea is not a new adversary, it has been an adversary since the beginning of Korean War. But when the history books are examined, one will understand that North Korea has been used an excuse for USA in containment policy. At the same time not only, USA but also Soviets and China used North Korea as a buffer zone between USA and them, so they helped North Korean nuclear development. North Korea has always been a playground for big powers.

The possibility of nuclear war has led an enormous profit in military industry complex due to the constant preparedness for a nuclear war. The military industry has an ongoing financial and emotional dominancy over government policies in order to sustain military dominance and nuclear deterrence (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-koehler/nuclear-realism_b_7470252.html, 28.05.2018).

The nuclear deterrence theory is the theory of the protection of USA and its allies. We should not totally believe what we are shown. We must remember that there is another side of the coin. When it comes to North Korea, critical questions, which are at the same time the fundamental questions of my thesis, arises. Is North Korea really a threat to the world security? Will North Korea start a nuclear war? Is North Korea strong enough to encounter USA? What are the real strategies and policies of USA in the Northeast Asia? Does it really deter North Korea to start a nuclear war against USA and US allies, or to control the region by showing North Korea as a threat? Answers to these questions will give a new viewpoint to the believed facts regarding North Korea and USA mutual politics.

On the other hand, USA has explicitly declared in its 2017 National Security Strategy that *“Nuclear weapons have served a vital purpose in America’s National Security Strategy for the past 70 years. They are the foundation of our strategy to preserve peace and stability by deterring aggression against the United States, our allies, and our partners. While nuclear deterrence strategies cannot prevent all conflict, they are essential to prevent nuclear attack, non-nuclear strategic attacks, and large-scale conventional aggression. In addition, the extension of the U.S. nuclear deterrent to more than 30 allies and partners helps to assure their security and reduces their need to possess their own nuclear capabilities.”* (National Security Strategy,2017;30).

It is not being logic to think a nuclear-free world. Nuclear weapons will last for a long time on earth and maybe even in the space in the near future (<http://www.unicankara.org.tr/tr/bm-silahsizsizlanma-komisyonu-uzayda-silahlanma-yarisini-onlemenin-yollarini-tartisiyor/>, 03.06.2018). The nuclear-owned states have

been using their nuclear deterrence and capability to deter their adversaries and to some extent the terrorist organizations although its illegitimate (Bagheri,2014;911). As long as the human greed towards absolute power lasts, a nuclear-free world will be a dream.

1. SHORT HISTORY OF KOREAN PENINSULA

Korea, which has possessed an authentic history extending over three thousand years, lay in the peninsula which extends southwards into the Sea of Japan from the northeastern boundaries of the China and has both southern and western sides by numerous islands (Longford,1918;9). Korean peninsula, which is in the northeast corner of Asia continent and comprises both North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and South Korea (Republic of Korea), occupies 220,991 square kilometers (Ick Lew,2000;6). The 2016 population of South Korea 51,245,707 (<https://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-rep>, 24.02.2018) and North Korea in the same year is 25,368,620 (<https://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-dem-peoples-rep?view=chart>, 24.02.2018). From now on "North Korea" will be used to mention "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" and South Korea for "Republic of Korea".



Map 1: North and South Korea (www.polgeonow.com/2013/04/what-is-north-korea.html, 24.02.2018)

Although the relationship with Japan originally started in B.C. 33 (Longford,1918; 89), Japan tried to invade Korea first in 1592. But this trial was not accomplished as required. Japanese forces prevailed in the land but were defeated on the sea (<http://www.localhistories.org/korea.html>, 24.02.2018). From the first serious contact with Japan, a hatred towards Japanese people was grown among Korean people.

In August 1910 Korea became a formal Japanese colony which is the first time in their written history. This occupation halted Korea's modernization processes. From the first date of occupation to 1945, the Japanese and some privileged Korean's benefited some economic gains (Ick Lew,2000;23). From 1938 to 1945 school education was only in Japanese and schoolchildren were forbidden to speak Korean (<http://www.localhistories.org/korea.html>, 01.03.2018). The Koreans were also forced to accept Japanese names and were coerced to worship Shinto shrines. The last years of the Japanese rule, Koreans saw the ruthlessness of Japanese, who exploited the Korean manpower and resources to support their war efforts in Manchuria (after 1932), Chinese mainland (after 1937) and the Pacific war against the U.S. forces (in 1941) (Ick Lew,2000;23). Finally, these restless measures increased Korean nationalism against alien nations. The Kim family fought against Japanese rule from the beginning of the occupation.

In 1945 after 35 years of occupation, Korea was liberated by U.S. and Soviet forces. The USA and Soviets took control of Korea, south by the USA and north by the USSR. The occupation forces divided Korea into two states, a democratic state called Republic of Korea (South Korea) and a communist state called Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). First, the division meant to be temporary. But in 1949, the occupation forces left the Peninsula,

making Koreans independent but divided into two ideologically contrasting states (Suh,2013;1).

The Korean War began at 04:00 a.m. on 25 June 1950, in the name of reuniting Korean Peninsula under North Korean flag, when North Korea, backed by USSR, attacked what appeared to be all offensive against South Korea. The North Korean offensive was actually started at 04:40 a.m. when the 38th parallel was blasted by North Korean artillery. At 05:00 a.m. North Korean infantry crossed the 38th parallel in Tongduchon-ni, Mansegyo-ri, Chunhon and Naepyong-ni areas, and at the same time North Korea conducted an amphibious landing on south of Kangnung on the east coast and in just 3 days North Korea managed to capture Seoul (US General Staff,1952;25). After the USA declared war against North Korea, China sent its troops for North Korea's aid. After harsh battles between North Korea, backed by USSR and China, and South Korea, backed by USA and other allied countries including Turkey, in 1953 an armistice was signed between the conflicting parties, but without an agreement. By 1953 the North Korean army, which almost destroyed South Korean army in 1950 and pushed the US 8th Army to the Sea of Japan, was only at one corps strength. North Korean casualties totaled at least half a million soldiers, and one million civilians are believed to be died. The damage on North Korean economy was approximately \$3 billion (Kim,1968;709).

As more and more US military units were deployed in the South Korea, China and USSR comprehended the importance of North Korea as a buffer one between them and the USA. In August 1953, North Korea received a \$250 million grant from USSR as well as a \$200 million from China. But China not only granted but it also gave up all the expanses, arising from the Korean War and promised to train North Korean technicians. In 1956, China borrowed \$430 million in addition to the \$2 billion, which is used for financing the war (Kim,1968;710).

2. UNDERSTANDING NORTH KOREA; JUCHE IDEOLOGY, NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

Although *Juche* cannot be translated to English properly, it means “self-reliance”. *Juche* consists of two Chinese characters: “*ju*” means rule and “*che*” means essence (Quinones,2008;2). The *Juche* ideology refers to North Korea’s political, economic, and military self-reliance, which became the driving force of North Korea’s domestic and foreign policy after World War 2 (<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-juche-ideology-of-north-korea.html>, 08.03.2018). The purpose of the *Juche* ideology is to cut of the Soviet influence over North Korea and to purge Kim Il Sung’s political rivals (http://www2.law.columbia.edu/course_00S_L9436_001/North%20Korea%20materials/3.html, 08.03.3018). North Korea is guided by *juche*, the idea authored by Kim Il Sung. The *Juche* ideology is based on the principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything. In other words, it is man-centered world view and a political motive to materialize the independence of the masses (http://www.korea-dpr.com/juche_ideology.html, 08.03.2018). Domestic and foreign independence would be impossible if North Korea lets the succumbing of foreign pressure or tolerating foreign intervention (Westby,2014;11). One cannot understand properly the North Korean state, its politics and its people unless having an overview on *Juche* ideology is done.

Today, the *Juche* ideology is exploited by the ruling elite in Pyongyang as an ideological weapon to legitimize its dictatorship. As a closed economic and social system, North Korean administration utilizes *Juche* ideology to make its impoverished people think parallel with the government. As the years elapsed, *Juche* served as the condition of succession from father to son (Myers,2015;75).

According to Kim Jong Il, the *Juche* ideology refers to a departure from Marxism-Leninism and the main adversaries to North Korea are the USA and Japan. To spread *Juche* ideology “*national culture should be developed*” because

Koreans must know well Korean history, geography, economics, culture, and the customs of the Korean nation, and in particular our Party's policy, its revolutionary history and revolutionary traditions. Only then will they be able to establish Juche and become true Korean patriots, the Korean Communists (Quinones,2008;3).

Closed systems, especially dictatorship administrations, must give unattainable goals to their public, so the systems would be safe because their people would work hard to reach the goal which is given by the government but never manage to do it. The *Juche* ideology is just an unattainable goal for North Korean people. They feel themselves unsuccessful about not reaching the goal. So North Korea justifies its nuclear ambitions among its people.

Songun is a policy which means "military first". This policy makes the Korean People's Army (KPA) as the leading element in dealing with the domestic and foreign affairs. So KPA is given the highest status and primary position both in society and government in North Korea (Westby,2014;12). Given the highest status and primary position the KPA gets the highest proportion in economics (Westby,2014;12) and in food distribution.

2.1 The Principles of Juche Ideology

Kim Jong Il portrays his "*Principles of Juche*" as "... explicit fundamental principles which must be observed in successfully carrying out the revolution...." As aforementioned, *Juche* is independence in politics, self-sufficiency in economy, and self-reliance in defense. Independence in politics refers to any "*yielding to foreign pressure and tolerating foreign intervention in politics or acting at the instigation of others...*" Depending to another political system must be avoided (Quinones,2008;3). Self-sufficiency in economy is;

*"Building an independent national economy means building an economy which is **free from dependence on others** and which stands on its own feet, an economy which serves one's*

own people and develops on the strength of the resources of one's own country and by the efforts of one's own people.” (Quinones,2008;3).

According to the explanation which is made by Kim Jong Il, self-reliance in defense is regarded as “*a fundamental principle of an independent state*” and “*defending one's country by one's own*” and “*receiving aid in national defense from fraternal countries and friends*” is prohibited (Quinones,2008;4).

“Only when the whole army is a cadre army will it become strong ... And a modernized army which blends its politico-ideological superiority with modern technology will become an unconquerable revolutionary army.” (Quinones,2008;4).

Juche ideology is a people-centered Korean socialism. In Korean socialism “people” regards to the great leaders of revolution, army, monumental edifices and the Korean citizens. And together with the “people” all policies of the Worker's Party of Korea are formulated by fully reflecting the desire and the wish of the people. According to Juche ideology the revolution should depend on the inexhaustible strength of the people (<http://www.pyongyangtimes.com.kp/?page=Politics&no=25478>., 18.03.2018).

North Korean elites justifies North Korea's proliferation of nuclear weapons by the help of *Juche* ideology. They regard to have nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles as a right. According to North Korea “*no country in the world has been subjected to US' nuclear threat as long and as harshly as the DPRK has been*” and “*no one has ever witnessed that vicious and outrageous nuclear war exercises at its doorstep*”(<http://www.pyongyangtimes.com.kp/?page=Affairs&no=25256>., 15.03.2018). North Korea is circled by strong countries in both economic and military terms such as Japan, China, Russia, South Korea and USA. In order to survive such a harsh environment, a country like North Korea should be strong in both economically and militarily. North Korea's conventional military strength is no

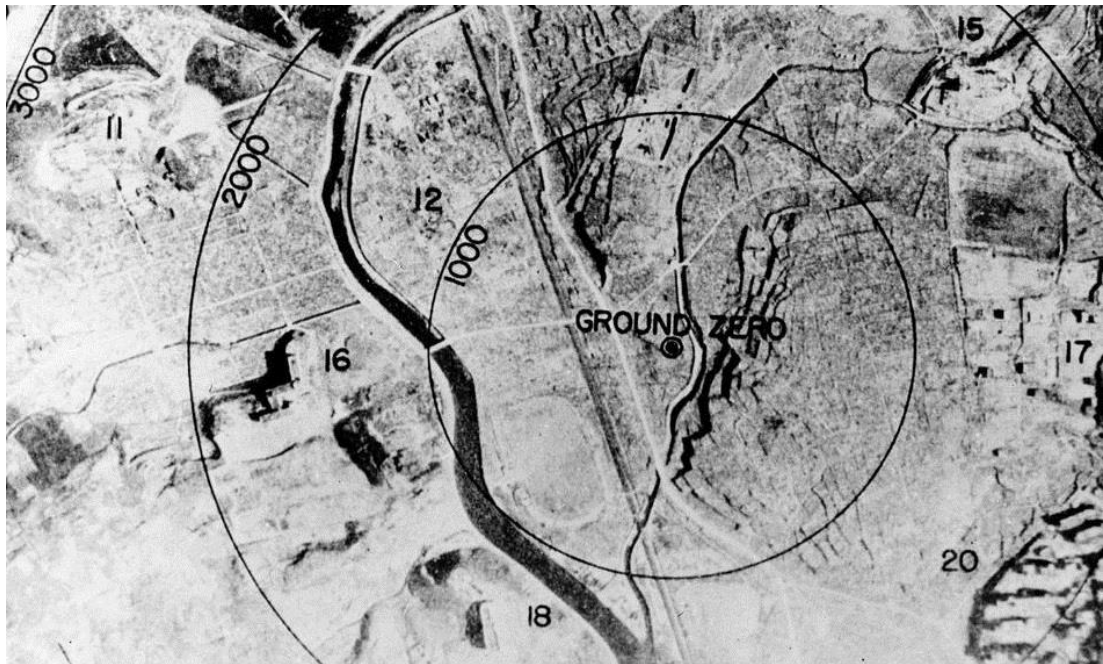
match to the adjacent countries in terms of quality but for quantity. In today's wars, quality is more important than quantity.

2.2 Nuclear Deterrence

The word "nuclear" was first used in real life at the end of WW2 when the first two nuclear bombs were exploded over Japan, one in Hiroshima and the other in Nagasaki. Although it was obvious that the WW2 was won by allies in May 1945, USA decided to drop nuclear bombs over Japan. The bombings occurred whether because of the revenge of Pearl Harbor attack or an intimidation to the world, especially to the USSR. So, they have opened a new age, age of nuclear weapons.



Picture 1 Nagasaki 8th August 1945 (<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-40871418>, 01.06.2018)



Picture 2 Nagasaki 9th August 1945 (<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-40871418>, 01.06.2018)

As seen on the pictures above, the “Fat Boy” (the name of the nuclear bomb) razed Nagasaki to the ground. The bombings showed the capacity and the willingness of USA to use such weapons. Not only Japan was affected by the nuclear bombs but also Korean Peninsula was affected too, given the proximity to Japan. Like the rest of the world, North Korea has seen the destructive power of nuclear weapons which might be used against itself one day. As North Korean constitution signifies that its possession of nuclear weapons in order to protect its state, so North Korea has developed its nuclear deterrence capability since the end of Korean War. Deterrence, both at the individual level or at the national level, involves in its most basic form of lodging of a threat against one’s opponent (Freund,1987;73). A threat is persuasive only if the state comprehends the threat-maker to be capable of what it threatens and the willingness to use its threat under certain circumstances (Freund,1987;74).

Until 1948, USA had enjoyed its leadership regarding nuclear weapons. USA has undervalued the USSR to develop a nuclear bomb. But when USSR exploded their first nuclear bomb in 1948, they became the second nuclear state in

the world which shocked USA deeply (Freund,1987;74). Today there are eight states that possess nuclear weapons (<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber-analiz/dunyanin-nukleer-gucleri>, 01.06.2018). The governments who possess nuclear weapons claims that they deter attack against their states by threatening the opponents with their nuclear weapons. So, the supporters of nuclear deterrence believe that another world war have been avoided thanks to the nuclear weapons. For example the West's nuclear deterrence prevented USSR to invade Western Europa (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/14/nuclear-deterrence-myth-lethal-david-barash>, 01.06.2018).

During the Cold War, USA and USSR had such an enormous nuclear arsenal that even after in the event of being hit by these two states had the capability to launch a devastating nuclear second strike. As a result, both states had to rely on their own nuclear deterrence to discourage the other from launching a nuclear strike (Powell,2003;88). This situation is now current for North Korea and USA. North Korea, just like former USSR, thinks that the more nuclear capability means the more deterrence towards USA and its allies in the region, thus enduring its political life. So, it is unlogic to think that North Korea would abandon its nuclear program albeit last news (<http://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/kuzey-kore-nukleer-deneme-sahasini-imha-etti-367103.html>, 03.06.2018).

USA has been the leading supporter of nuclear deterrence, in other words nuclear realism. Both written in its National Security Strategy and underlined by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in 2002 that the proliferation of WMD's would limit United States' competence to protect US foreign policy goals and said that this would cause a nuclear blackmail against US citizens (Powell,2003;86). North Korea, as well as USA, has been proliferating nuclear weapons to protect its sovereign area, cities and citizens. So, the main idea of nuclear weapons is to prevent other states from aiming unwanted purposes. In a realist world, abandoning nuclear weapons is a myth given that war is a reoccurring event in human nature, in history of nations, in the nature of international relations and in determining factors which cause action, reaction, cooperation, hostility and peace between states

(<http://www.e-ir.info/2012/02/19/realism-liberalism-and-the-possibilities-of-peace/>, 08.06.2018).

3. POLICIES OVER NORTH KOREA

To understand the nuclear ambitious of North Korea, firstly the policies over North Korea should be examined carefully. In this section the policies of the USA, Russia, Japan and China will be examined. Because these four great powers influence the shaping of Northeast Asia, I consider them as the riding company over North Korea.

North Korea's foreign policy can be summarized as to force global and regional powers for a complicated negotiation and during the negotiation era, develop nuclear program in order to get what they want.

3.1. China

The relationship with China and North Korea can be explained by both geographical proximity and historical linkage. China and North Korea are neighbors whom share more than 1334 km of border. China's main thoughts about Korean peninsula are; maintaining long term stability and peace, prevent huge masses of refugee influx through the border, stabilizing détente between two Korea's, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as well as nuclear weapons, and the most important of all, establish a barrier between China and South Korea who is under US influence both economically, politically and military (Liu,2003;349).China has been the most important trading partner, approximately 90 % of imports (<https://theconversation.com/dont-rely-on-china-north-korea-wont-kowtow-to-beijing-82423>., 11.03.2018), and main source of food and energy. The reason why China is the foremost food and energy supplier of North Korea is to sustain Kim regime, so that North Korea would not collapse and the refugee influx would be avoided across the 870 mile border (<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship>., 12.03.2018).

Frankly China sees North Korea as a buffer zone between the capitalist west and the communist east.

The most important Chinese foreign policy towards the Korean peninsula is the status quo. But while maintaining status quo, China seems to prefer continuation of a divided and non-conflictual peninsula (Harris,2013;185). A change in the status quo on behalf of the USA would mean that being surrounded by the global power. This would undermine Chinese interests in Yellow Sea especially about Taiwan and Japan. USA deployed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in 2017 to boost its dominance in the region, of which China strictly condemns given China sees this action as a threat to its national security (https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/china-north-korea-relationship?utm_medium=social_earned&utm_source=tw&utm_term=china-north-korea-relationship&utm_content=092817, 15.03.2018). The deployment of THAAD in Japan and South Korea also concerns China (Scobell,2017;2). THAAD system is designed to intercept and destroy short and medium range ballistic missiles during their last phrase of flight. The system instead relying on “hit to kill”, they destroy incoming missiles by hitting them “head on” to destroy (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3950346/thaad-missile-defence-system-us-test-north-korea-where-deployed-how-work/>, 11.03.2018). Because the THAAD system is used for destroying both WMD’s and nuclear weapons, China is against nuclear North Korea. With the belligerence of North Korea to attack US soil with a nuclear weapon, USA keeps its Aegis ships, which are also used for to intercept and destroy incoming missile, and THAAD system close to North Korea as well as China. Another danger for China is the military exercises, which are held annually by USA and South Korea jointly. North Korea and China regards military exercises as the rehearsal of an invasion of North Korea. USA values applying pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear program, whereas China supports the necessity of the multilateral talks and “freeze for freeze” policy, which means a freeze in military exercises and a freeze in North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile tests (https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/china-north-korea-relationship?utm_medium=social_earned&utm_source=tw&utm_term=china-north-korea-relationship&utm_content=092817., 15.03.2018). As USA deployed THAAD

system and other conventional military systems both in Japan and South Korea, China perceives this as a danger for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while USA sees it as a national security problem and an issue of rights of its allies in the region (Dobbins, Scobell, Burke, Gombert, Grossman, Heginbotham and Shatz,2017;4). Efforts done by the USA to increase its military presence in Northeast Asia is perceived by both China and Russia as “the threat of Eurasian encirclement” from the enlargement of NATO in the West and the USA and its allies in the East (Harris,2013; 173).

Just like China, other countries in the region such as Russia, Japan, South Korea are against a nuclear Korean peninsula. In 2003 Six Party Talks, which is aimed at ending North Korea’s nuclear program, were started under the chairman of China. Furthermore, if North Korea collapses, by a nuclear war or a regime collapse, China would lose its northern buffer and the USA, and its ally South Korea would be at its heels. So, China is very enthusiastic about getting all sides on the same table (<http://www.dw.com/en/what-is-chinas-role-in-the-north-korean-crisis/a-40029214>., 12.03.2018). In 2005, North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear program, in return of food and energy aid. This was not the first time that North Korea agrees to abandon its nuclear program. In 1994, the USA and North Korea negotiated an Agreed Framework (AF), which North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear and uranium enrichment program in return of energy aid. According to the AF, USA would build two light water reactors (LWRs) and Japan, South Korea and USA would provide heavy fuel oil. But George W. Bush administration stopped energy assistance and building LWRs given that North Korea was reported to had been secretly developing a uranium-based nuclear program, which is used for generating nuclear weapons (Manyin and Nikitin,2014;1). But in October 2002 the members of the six party talks decided to stop fuel oil shipment due to the secret uranium enrichment program. In December North Korea expelled all the inspectors from Yongbyon nuclear site and withdraw itself from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) (Manyin and Nikitin,2014;5).

North Korea uses malnutrition and starvation problems to get food and energy aid. But according to observers and activists, the actual reason of starvation, which is deliberately done by North Korean administration, is due to the unequal food distribution system (Manyin and Nikitin,2014;6). As aforementioned before, Songun ideology refers to “military first”. This means the soldiers would gain the biggest proportion of food. Some defectors, especially soldier defectors, draw a clear picture about the starvation and malnutrition in North Korea. Even in the army, the food is low quality and soldiers seldom get enough proportion of food. To illustrate, Kim Eunjung, a defector who had served in the army as a junior officer for ten years, claimed that food was low quality and said that “everyone was sick in the army, all the time”. Another incident was a North Korean soldier who defected to South Korea in 2017, and whose stomach was full of parasitic worms. His doctor, Lee Cook-jong said that he had only seen something like that in a medical textbook in his 20 years of surgeon life (<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/890276/north-korea-latest-news-parasite-worm-defector-soldier-army-report-world-war-3/amp>., 12.03.2018). In September 2005, the six party talks members decided their willingness to provide energy assistance to North Korea (Manyin and Nikitin,2014;6).

In accordance with all these problems which North Korea faces, China has been reluctantly drawn into multilateral campaign to pressure North Korea economically and by doing so, North Korea puts the blame on China given the Chinese support for sanctions, which increases North Korea’s financial burden (Pak,2017;11). China has been seeking a balanced politics between abandonment of North Korea and entrapment by USA. In order to avoid abandonment of North Korea, China has kept objecting USA’s willingness about harsh measures, economic sanctions and military strike. And when it comes to the possibility of entrapment by US military power, China has pressured on North Korea and established strong relations with USA (Dongjin,2012;5).

But in 2006 when the decision by North Korea to launch test missiles and to test a nuclear device on 9 October 2006 dramatically influenced the Chinese policy towards North Korea. After the first firing of North Korean Taepodong missile, a

missile which can be used to carry a miniaturized nuclear device, to launch a satellite to orbit has shifted the Japanese military developments. This paved the way for the Japan-US military cooperation which is against Chinese interests (Harris,2013;186). After the test, China agreed on and backed up the UN sanctions under UNSCR1718 against North Korea. China's goal in backing the sanctions against North Korea was to prevent instability in the Korean peninsula and to prevent North Korea from belligerence which might result in the ruin of the buffer zone with South Korea and USA. After sanctions had been applied, North Korea agreed to freeze its plutonium related nuclear facilities in exchange for energy aid. But in 2009, North Korea made its second underground nuclear test and China again voted in favor of UNSCR 1874, condemning North Korea's behavior. In 2012, North Korea launched Unha-3 rocket, but this time China only expressed regret, and obstructed charging of further sanctions by the UN. But in 2013, when North Korea made its third nuclear test, China participated in drafting UNSCR 2094 against North Korea (Easley and Park,2016; 652). Apart from sanctions since 2013, China's foreign policy towards North Korea has shifted from mutual assistance whatever happens to criticize publicly. After Xi Jinping became the president of China, Chinese foreign policy towards North Korea has started to change. Since Xi Jinping's accession, given the delicacy of the China-North Korea relationship, China had been reluctant to criticize North Korea explicitly, even North Korea's some provocative actions undermined China's national interests in the region. In 2013, after North Korea's third nuclear test, China for the first time stated that it would oppose any provocative actions from any party and would not allow any troublemaking in the region (Zhang,2015;12). But still China does not believe that North Korea would give up its nuclear ambitions even with the sharpest diplomatic and economic measures (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/11/28/china-should-send-30000-troops-into-north-korea-symmetrical-reassurance/>., 12.03.2018).

China's enforcement of sanctions against North Korea has been blur since 2006. China has applied some aspects of sanctions, which relates to North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear program, but China has less control over controlling border trade, which is vital for the border cities to North Korea (Nanto and Manyin,2010;2). China has been serving as the lead facilitator of North Korea-China

black market trade. Chinese companies have been assisting North Korean banks to keep connected to the world markets. By circumnavigating around the sanctions, China gives message to North Korea that its nuclear ambitions are unacceptable but at the same time it does not want to trigger North Korea's collapse or turn it into a permanent adversary (https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea?utm_medium=social_earned&utm_source=tw&utm_campaign=backgrounder&utm_term=what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea&utm_content=100917., 15.03.2018). Apart from the sanctions, which are applied by UN Security Council, USA has applied separate sanctions to both China and Russia. As China has been the greatest exporter to North Korea, sanctions applied by the USA against North Korea affects mostly the Chinese entities. In January 2018, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has decided to apply sanctions to nine private entities, sixteen individuals and six vessels of whose origin are both Chinese and Russian given the ongoing development of WMDs (http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1086592.shtml?utm_content=buffer01cf2&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer., 16.03.2018). The main goal of the US sanctions on Chinese and Russian entities are to bring maximum pressure on North Korea in order to reduce North Korea's hard currency earnings, interrupting and prohibiting the acquisition of materials, equipment and technology which are needed for developing nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and encouraging China to stop facilitating North Korea's illicit efforts (Einhorn,2017;6). According to US policymakers, China plays a pivotal role in to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, to prevent nuclear proliferation and to enforce economic sanctions (Nanto and Manyin,2010;1).

Given that the national goal of North Korea is to be recognized as a nuclear power and to persuade the world to "learn to live in peace" with a nuclear-armed North Korea. To achieve this national goal, Kim regime asks North Korean people to sacrifice their food for the North Korean Armed Forces. So, the North Korean elites do not be affected by the economic sanctions, only the poor citizens of North Korea are being affected. The efforts to apply Chinese and Russian entities can be

understood that these sanctions are particularly to ban the luxury goods for North Korean elites (Nanto and Manyin,2010;2).

Another Chinese fear about North Korea is the collapse of North Korean regime. The collapse may occur either economic collapse given the sanctions or by a war. The collapse would jeopardize the security of North Korea's WMDs and missiles and may lead to a huge amount of refugee influx. China would have to secure WMDs (Dobbins J., Scobell A., Burke E., Gombert D., Grossman D., Heginbotham E. and Shatz H,2017;3) and this would mean a confrontation with South Korea and USA. Sanctions makes the North Korean economy worse. As aforementioned, fears might occur if the North Korean economy collapses, which China absolutely opposes. But like the USA, China also has apprehension about North Korean brinkmanship and unpredictability; the financial drain China incurs by continuing prop up its bankrupt ally's economy, the potential of North Korea's provocation of nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia, and the potential China's military involvement in any conflict provoked by North Korea (Nanto and Manyin,2010;6). So, China's food and energy aid can be seen as to avoid paying higher economic and national security costs of a North Korean collapse or a war on the peninsula. China's food and energy aid not only helps to stabilize North Korean economy and regime, but it also helps to encourage North Korea to reform its economy (Nanto and Manyin,2010;7).

At first China did not pay significant attention and made a strong response to the North Korean ballistic missile tests, given that China was accustomed to such threatening events from North Korea whenever the six party talks were stagnated. China perceived these tests as the bluff that North Korea used to pressure the USA for lifting the economic sanctions (Feng,2009;46).

The ongoing ballistic missile tests and nuclear tests, China started to change its foreign policy towards North Korea. China's influence over North Korea has been declining sharply since the first nuclear test in 2006. A nuclear North

Korea is a great challenge to Chinese interests in the region. North Korean policies are strongly conflict with Chinese diplomatic goals (Feng,2009;52). The reason why North Korea keeps ballistic and nuclear tests though Chinese continuous opposition and warnings is because North Korea believed that China would not punish North Korea by applying sanctions. Obviously, North Korea is convinced that North Korea is a precious buffer zone between China and US military in South Korea and given this reason China would not abandon North Korea (Feng,2009;49). As a result, China revised its policy towards North Korea. On January 5, 2018, China's ministry of Commerce declared that they imposed a ban on oil supplies and imports of North Korean steel. This is seen by USA that these measures are proof of that China is in full compliance with UN sanctions. Eventhough China may seem in compliance with the UN sanctions, it does not actually mean a breach in China-North Korea relations. These measures are aim to reassert China's control over North Korea (<https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/chinas-approach-to-north-korea-sanctions/>, 18.03.2018). Apart from sanctioning on North Korea, China also declared that they would not come to North Korea's aid if they hit by the USA given the missile threatening, but if the USA hits first (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-warns-north-korea-youre-on-your-own-if-you-go-after-the-us/2017/08/11/a01a4396-7e68-11e7-9026-4a0a64977c92_story.html?utm_term=.289a8ce85865., 21.03.2018) according to Article 2, Treaty of Friendship between China and North Korea, which was signed in July 11, 1961 (https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china_dprk.htm, 21.03.2018). The Article 2 says "*The Contracting Parties undertake jointly to adopt all measures to prevent aggression against either of the Contracting Parties by any state. In the event of one of the Contracting Parties being subjected to the armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal.*"

On the other hand, although China seems to punish North Korea, China did not take a strong stance against North Korea on the event that a North Korean mini-sub torpedoed a South Korean navy vessel in March 2010, killing 46 sailors on board. China did not also take a stance against North Korea in the bombardment a

South Korean island in November 2010, killing two marines and a civilian. Whatever North Korea does as provocation or whether China likes it or not, North Korea is a precious asset and an important ally for China in the region (Song,2011;1134). If China does not play on behalf of North Korea, then North Korea could backfire on China, which would jeopardize Chinese goal to be a global power. Getting Kim Jong-Un on his knees in front of the international community will not advance Chinese vision of a China centered order in East Asia (<http://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/viewpoint/why-wont-china-help-north-korea-remember-1956>., 21.03.2018).

There are two main reasons for China both to preserve North Korea as an ally and a buffer zone and to impose sanctions. First one is the US military presence in the region and the likelihood of a military conflict just at the back yard of China. China does not want to slow down its economic development, so they do not want to be involved in a military conflict, especially with the USA. That is why China imposes sanctions on North Korea and declares that they would not aid North Korea if they are hit by USA in the event of a missile provocation. And the second one, which is more important, is the probability of the US dominance in the region because of North Korea's provocations. The USA may exploit North Korea's provocations in order to establish dominance on China and prevent Chinese rise in the Far East Asia, which will result in the encirclement of China and Russia from east. This problem can be seen in the words of Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2009;

"[The United States has] strengthened its military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened strategic cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam, inveigled Pakistan, established a pro-American government in Afghanistan, increased arms sales to Taiwan, and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points from [China's] east, south, and west." (Song,2011;1136).

In order to make US overstretch in the Far East Asia costlier, China invests in the deployment of precision guided munitions as the anti-access/area-denial objective

within the Chinese army missions. North Korea's anti-access/area-denial objective is component to that of Chinese, thus it can be believed that China lets North Korea to access its military signal capabilities (<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/north-korea-using-chinas-satellites-guide-its-missiles-20810?page=2>., 23.03.2018). China apart from the military signals capabilities invests in a new high-altitude drone. This drone is designed to operate in "near space", 12.5 miles above the sea level and can hardly be detected by air defense systems, can avoid radar detection due to their small size, and can gather precious intelligence data without lashing into anti-aircraft fire. Some features of this new designed Chinese drone are superior than the US drones. Chinese drones can fly automatically while adjusting their flight path and sending data back to the operation center. Some other sensors are equipped in the Chinese drones such as terrain mapping device and electromagnetic signal detector that would allow it to pinpoint military troops (<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/america-no-match-chinas-new-space-drones-23039>., 23.03.2018). China can also give the new-designed drones to North Korea to increase its military domain.

China knows that the ballistic and missile threat, which North Korea generates, would make the USA to accelerate its missile defense program for itself and its allies in the region. Such an accelerated missile defense program would undermine the effectiveness of China and its core interests in the region. The North Korean threat keeps US forces in the South Korean and Japan intact, scrutinizing at North Korea (Nanto and Manyin,2010;8).

Consequently, even though China knows that North Korean assurances, about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula for a peace is empty, they see possible negotiations between South Korea, USA and North Korea as easing the tensions in the region, preventing from a conflict in its neighborhood and maybe a split in the South Korean-USA military alliance. It will be a good situation for China if the sanctions on North Korea are eased, USA and South Korea reduces their mutual military exercises and lighten pressure on North Korea

(<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/04/09/kim-jong-un-will-not-give-up-north-koreas-nuclear-weapons/>., 20.04.2018).

3.2. Russia

Russia, like China, has often bumpy relations with North Korea. Russia has usually emphasized that a nuclear North Korea on the Russian border is a destabilizing factor for Russian interests in the region. On the other hand, Russia has also underlined the importance of Russian-North Korean relations in order to retain the buffer zone between Russia and the USA and balance the US politics in the region (Buszynski, 2009;809). To establish a buffer zone against an American influence, which is very strong in the Korean peninsula, although North Korea and Russia are no longer military allies, they are seeking new arms export and agreements for logistic supply (Youn,1999;435). Russia implements interdependent policies of both restrain and cooperation with USA and China and thus Russia not only defends its interests in the North East Asia but also increases its influence in the region (Shin,2008;174). Today nonnuclear North Korea is vital for Russian economic reconstruction and Russia realized that enlarging its influence in the East is by far better rather than enlarging influence in the West given the power of NATO and European Union, in other words USA. For Russia, if a nonnuclear North Korea is wanted, then the security interests of North Korea should be taken into account. So, Northeast Asia plays a vital role for Russia as a gate to Pacific, Korean Peninsula may be the key for this gate (Ponomareva and Rudov, 2016;47).

In the Soviet era, the USSR was a major source of vital economic aid. And mostly the USSR was the only source of economic aid for North Korea, although the North Korea never accepted the importance of it (Lankov;92) in the light of Juche ideology. Before Gorbachev's presidency in March 1985, the USSR and North Korea had sustained close military relationship; for USSR to protect its Far Eastern territories and to widen its military influence in North East Asia (Youn,1999;437). North Korea had always been a major importance for USSR as a strategic buffer zone for an American attack. North Korea also played a vital role for USSR as it tied down a great amount of US forces in the Japan and South Korea, or else those US troops could be a threat for the USSR in the Europe. But the mutual relationship was

deteriorated after USSR had established economic ties with South Korea in 1990 (Youn,1999;437) given that USSR saw the economic salvation in the economies such as South Korea not North Korea. Although North Korea played a vital role for the USSR, she never recognized North Korea as close ally (Lankov;92,93). Once having realized by North Korea that China and Russia left them alone in both diplomatic and security areas, North Korea had no choice but to reinforce its independent diplomatic activities and nuclear programs which is viewed as a vital survival strategy (Youn,1999;441).

In the last phrase of USSR, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, North Korea was used as a bridgehead for widening Moscow's influence in Northeast Asia. But by the end of the 1980s, the USSR disregarded North Korea and established strong economic ties with economically powerful South Korea (Moltz, 381) in order to fix its collapsing economy. In 1961 treaty with North Korea, the USSR accepted that they would support North Korea if an US attack occurred. But Boris Yeltsin declared that they would not renew the 1961 treaty and they would support North Korea only if an unprovoked attack occurs, which means the USSR lost its former leverage on the North Korea (Blank,1995;712).

After USSR had collapsed, during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, two countries maintained the relations only at the ambassador level. This stillness in the diplomacy between Russia and North Korea started on August 27, 1992, when China established diplomatic relations with South Korea and thus Russia lost its advantage over Korean peninsula being the major power influencing on both North and South Korea (Buszynski, 2009;811). Only after Vladimir Putin's undertaking of power in Russia brought interim political and economic rapprochement (Ponomareva and Rudov, 2016;46). But acting together in the Asian security issues, Russia and China, and establishing good relations with South Korea on economic areas limits North Korea to drag both Russia and China into a crisis (Blank,1995;712).

The collapse of the USSR and soon after the decline of Russian influence in the Northeast Asia were seen by USA as an indifference of Russia and as a result Russia was regarded as an unimportant player in the region. As a result, USA obstructed Russia from influencing Northeast Asia but this strategy turned out to be wrong and exclusion of Russia proved to be an important gap in the US policy towards North Korea (Shin,2015;117).

As aforementioned, USSR was the major source of economic aid for North Korea until its collapse. But Russia expressed that it would not provide excessive economic aid and carry out an unbalanced trade with North Korea as done by USSR, which swelled the existing debt. The debt of North Korea to the USSR in 1990 was approximately 3.2 billion rubles (\$8.8 billion in 2007). Although North Korea pressurized Russia to obliterate its debt, Russia refused. This shift in the economic policy towards North Korea caused a loss of influence over North Korea, which was usually employed by USSR to its allies (Buszynski,2009;813-814).

In economic point of view, North Korea is not an attractive country for Russia. It will not be wrong to mention that Russia has no significant economic interests in North Korea at all (Lankov;96). To illustrate, in 2008, North Korea's trade was \$4.5 billion and in the same year the trade between North Korea and Russia reached to \$140 million, only %2.9 of North Korea's total trade volume (Lankov;96). In 2016, the trade volume between North Korea and Russia was \$76.8 million, which is lower than of \$234.9 million in 2005, so this decline means the trade volume between these two countries has been declining for years (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/russia-north-korea-putin-kim-nuclear-united-nations-sanctions/539592/>, 04.04.2018). It is often thought that North Korea's abundant mineral wealth is Russia's interest in North Korea and Russia has sent mining survey groups to North Korea for 10 years. While the mineral wealth of North Korea might be appealing for China, it is not appealing for Russia which has abundant mineral wealth in Siberia (Lankov;96). Nevertheless, the instability of the Korean Peninsula is an impediment for Russian strategic aims in the North East Asia. Russian Far East is a rising economic star for Russia. The

state-owned gas company, GAZPROM, and another state-owned oil company, ROSNEFT, considers Russian Far East as an important strategic export base and a new export market. So, the ongoing ballistic missile tests, nuclear tests and the threat of weapons of mass destruction generates insecurity among the citizens who live in the Russian Far East (Fedorovsky,2013;5-6). According to Russia, North Korea's stability has vital importance in accordance with the economic development of Russian Far East and strategic aims about North East Asia. The only economic cooperation with North Korea without any problem is probably the business, which is the need of North Korean labor. The labor shortages at the Russian Far East have forced the local Russian administration to acquire work force elsewhere and thus a great deal of North Korean labors (according to US State Department approximately 20.0000-50.000 North Koreans (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/russia-north-korea-putin-kim-nuclear-united-nations-sanctions/539592/>, 04.04.2018)) have been sent to Russian Far East(Lankov;97). When China stopped energy exports to North Korea, Russia filled the gap and became North Korea's leading ally. Russia has also invested in North Korea's infrastructure and provided technical aid (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm_term=.b831bf23ef3d, 04.04.2018).

North Korea seeks assistance from both Russia and China in order to lengthen its life. As North Korea knows, it cannot survive unless they keep getting assistance from other countries. So, they create an insecure position by using its nuclear power to gain economic assistance. Korean peninsula is important for both USA, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea. A downfall of the North Korean regime would cause huge problems for the aforementioned countries. The economic progress of China, Russia and South Korea would be hampered. A great deal of refugee flow into China, Russia and South Korea would create insecurity among the citizens who live in the North Korean border. And important to all, the nuclear stockpile, whose exact whereabouts are unknown, might fall in the wrong hands, such as terrorist organizations and third states who back up terrorist activities and thus a stockpile could be used for various evil aims. So, it is necessary for Russia as

well as China and South Korea to avoid a regime collapse in North Korea and reduce its economic isolation. And with no doubt, North Korea bargain the threat of its collapse in order to gain support from both its allies and even from the states those hostile to the regime (Buszynski,2009;816). Russians also proposed a deal to connect North Korea to Europe via railway. The railway project's aim is to connect trans-Siberian railroad to inter-Korean railways, which connects to South Korean port of Busan. Thus, both shipping time from South Korea to Europe would reduce from 30-40 days for sea transport to 13-18 days for railway transport and this project would strengthen North Korea economy by applying transit fees. But the obsolete railway system in North Korea and the transit fees charged by Russia have caused the South Koreans to pull their interests from the project. South Koreans calculated that it is still cheaper to ship to Europe by sea (Buszynski,2009;817).

Another economic and political generosity from Russia is an agreement about the erasing Soviet era debts. According to the agreement, which was signed on 5 May 2014, that Russia releases North Korea the debt of \$9.87 billion of \$10.96 billion, in other words %90 of the entire debt. The rest of the debt is to be paid over 20 years in 40 equal payments. With this agreement Russia aims to stay in the North Korean market, which provides opportunities for other countries as well as Russia, in order to raise its presence in the region (Ponomareva and Rudov, 2016;49). In addition to erasing North Korean debts, Russia also allow North Korea to use its facilities to ship coal to Japan and South Korea. So, Russia fears about excessive punitive measures against North Korea due to the possibility of a regime collapse, which would create an insatiability in the region and might cause a sharp decrease Russian interests to be a regional power (<https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/russias-relationship-with-north-korea-its-complicated/>, 04.04.2018). The political generosity is about delivering natural gas to South Korea via North Korea. With the implementation of the EU sanctions about natural gas, Russia is seeking new markets to sell its natural gas and South Korea seems to be the new market. To supply South Korea with Russian natural gas, a new gas pipeline was planned to be constructed on the land, which is much more expensive, and underneath the sea, both are territory of North Korea (Ponomareva and Rudov, 2016;49).

Russia is opposed to any incidents that escalate the tensions in the region. Not only from North Korea but also from USA. For example, the military drills that take place in South Korea, which are believed to be the rehearsal for an invasion, with the participation of US and South Korean troops is obviously a source of tension (Ponomareva and Rudov, 2016;47). On the other hand, Russia knows that not opposing in every policy of USA and cooperation with China is essential to be a regional power in North East Asia. For example, the two countries have expressed their resistance towards USA, which is considered as a strategic response to the deployment of US Missile Defense in both South Korea and Japan (Shin,2008;174). So, Russia's one of main policies towards North East Asia is to create an Asian coalition to prevent US deployment of THAAD system in the region (Buszynski,2009;814).

The strategic goals of China, Russia and USA over Northeast Asia should not only be seen as a form of seeking hegemony by strengthening one's national power, but also should be seen as a cooperation in the non-militaristic area. Before the collapse of the USSR, when she was a hegemonic state in the Eurasia, USA and China had worked together to limit Soviet influence in Northeast Asia, but after the collapse, this situation was reversed, and Russia and USA worked together to limit Chinese influence in the Northeast Asia (Shin,2008;175). However, after the first nuclear test of North Korea in 2006, China's increasing challenge to US politics in the Northeast Asia compelled China to maintain a mutual geopolitical balance with USA. This alarmed Russia since it was losing its influence in Northeast Asia. So, Russia stayed away from both China and USA in their proliferation policy towards North Korea (<https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/russias-relationship-with-north-korea-its-complicated/>, 04.04.2018).

Given Russia wants to be a global player as it used to be in the Soviet era, Russia seeks regional hegemony in the Northeast Asia. She established a strong presence in the Eurasia and now she is trying to enlarge her influence both in the Middle East and Northeast Asia. And vice versa, USA wants to limit both Russian

and Chinese influence in the Northeast Asia. By doing so, USA will circle Russia and China from East and Southeast. The deploying THAAD systems both in South Korea and Japan, and the presence of US Army in the region is the solid evidence for this goal. Russia strongly resists to the deployment of THAAD system. Russia claims that THAAD system angers North Korea and threatens Russia's national security (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm_term=.b831bf23ef3d, 04.04.2018). North Korea is just an excuse which USA uses for its strategical interests and aims, which are encircling the two other regional powers China and Russia and keeping Japan and South Korea under its control. North Korea's nuclear issue and belligerent behavior helps USA to strengthen its hand over Russia, China, South Korea and Japan.

Russia works to shape the security environment in the Northeast Asia in the line of its own interests given that Russia lost its influence in the region after the collapse of the USSR. More specifically, Russia seeks to supersede USA as its role of global power and views North Korea as the victim of US hegemonic policy in the region (<https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/russias-relationship-with-north-korea-its-complicated/>, 04.04.2018). For example, Russia criticized US handling of the North Korean ballistic missile test of which was held on July 4, 2017. While USA says that the test was an intercontinental ballistic missile against Japan, Russia claims that the test was an intermediate-ranged rocket. Russia also opposes to the tighter sanctions which are applied by UN resolutions. This is how Russia shows its power both to its citizens and the world and make the international arena to see it as a great power (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/26/why-is-putin-backing-north-korea-to-build-up-russia-as-a-great-power/?utm_term=.b831bf23ef3d, 04.04.2018).

To sum, it can be said about Russian politics and strategy towards North Korea that "*Given Russia's desire to remain relevant as a player on Korean peninsula-related issues, Moscow's primary objective will be to secure a continued presence in any future revival of multilateral diplomacy with North*

Korea. A more aggressive scenario might have Russia play a spoiler role in opposing U.S. interests, but this strategy is risky given the unpredictability and historically-evident costs of being dragged into renewed North Korean-made military conflict.” (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/russia-and-north-korean-nuclear-challenge>, 07.04.2018).

3.3. Japan

“A historical lesson of the arduous revolutionary struggle against the Japanese imperialists is that the destiny of the country can only be shaped by the united efforts of the whole nation.” (Kim Il Sung,1994)

The relations between North Korea and Japan are determined by not only with geopolitics, economic or diplomatic but also by historic events and the relations between North Korea and Japan is defined by mutual distrust which have its roots until the beginning of the 20th century when the first time Korea was ruled by an alien state. North Korea’s anti-imperialist notion is directed to especially Japan, who exploited Korean people from 1905 to the end of the WW2 and according to North Korea, the Japan’s foreign policy goals have not changed since then. But at the same time, North Korea also think that the USA has substitute Japan as the leading imperialist state in the region. Therefore, the imperialist power in Korea during WW2 is now allied with the imperialist power after the WW2 (Roy, 1988;1282-1283). On the other hand, Japan views North Korea as the leading destabilizer in Pacific region due to the suspected development of the nuclear weapons and the ballistic missile tests, which are regarded as a threat to Japan’s own security (Hangström and Söderberg,2006;374) and for the first time Japanese Marines has conducted a large-scale military exercise with US Marines (<https://www.cnnturk.com/dunya/ikinci-dunya-savasindan-ilk-defa-japon-ordusu-harekete-gecti>, 11.04.2018). As Japan regards North Korea as the greatest threat to its national security, she has started to invest in its army, which is an army for national defense after the WW2 and has started to deploy anti-ballistic missile units and interceptors (Heijmans,2010;365).

As Bruce Cumings wrote in his book that the Japanese occupation of North Korea as “*akin to the Nazi occupation of France, in the way it dug in deeply and gnawed at the Korean national consciousness ever since*” (Cumings 2010; 44). Some historic events determine the relations between Japan and North Korea. Both North Korea and South Korea remembers the 1910 annexation by Japan and the trouble of the colonial rule until 1945 (<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/11/18/shadows-of-the-past-haunt-japan-north-korea-relations/>, 07.04.2018). North Korean people never forgot the struggle with Japan, which was the first alien rule in North Korea, and they grew hatred towards Japan and Japanese people (<http://www.korea-dpr.com/modern.html>, 07.04.2018). An anti-imperialist thought was grown in the minds of the Korean people both during the colonial rule and during the WW2. During the Japanese occupation, Korean Peninsula was ruled by brutal military system which debar Koreans even from basic freedoms. Before the WW 2, Korean people had been enlisted in the Japanese army, most of the manpower of Korea was evaporated during the WW2 (Ick Lew, 2000;23). Although Japan had been the foremost foreign actor in the Korean peninsula until the end of the WW2, in the postwar era Japan has been disregarded as an important foreign actor. Japan’s role on North Korean politics is mostly supporting USA and South Korean policies towards North Korea (Hangström and Söderberg,2006;376).

During the Cold War, Japan has five aims towards North Korea, which were to maintain a stable and peaceful environment for the region, to seek a close alliance with USA in order to maintain its own security, to establish close relations with the states in the regional neighbors, to enlarge its role in security matters and to fulfill bilateral issues with North Korea (Akaha,2007;297). Japan had preserved a hostile foreign policy towards North Korea due to the latter’s military confrontation with South Korea and USA during the Cold War. However, Japan has tried to improve its relations with North Korea when the Cold War structure relaxed (Lee, 2003;69). In other words, having geopolitically and historically interests on Korean Peninsula, Japan would not be indifferent to North Korea in an environment where the USSR and China had started to normalize their relations with South Korea. Japan would neither neglect the relations with North Korea and would not regard

North Korea as a hostile country (Lee, 2003;75-76). As a result, Japan considered normalizing relations with North Korea in order to maintain a secure environment for the region. But the priority was to establish strong relations with USA in terms of security and to improve cooperation both with China and South Korea (<http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2014/07/201471463636626619.html>, 09.04.2018). While the Japanese constitution (Article 9) sets the limits of Japan army (https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html, 09.04.2018), USA provides security to Japan with the signing of the United States-Japan Security Treaty in 1951, of which US commitment to defend Japan against external aggression, in return USA would use Japanese military bases for its Pacific military installations (Norman;1993,205). Consequently, Japan thought that she could increase her influence on the Korean Peninsula by establishing a relationship with North Korea and realized that improving relations with North Korea is suitable with her national interests, only if Japan liaises with other countries (Lee,2003;77).

As aforementioned that the greatest threat to Japan's own security is North Korea, but it may be confusing that the Japanese people regards the abductees issue as the foremost problem before Japan's national and regional security (Heijmans,2010;365). During the 70's and 80's 17 Japanese citizens were abducted by North Korea and according to Japan, the abduction issue should be solved if a normalization in the North Korea and Japan relations wanted (www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/abduction/index.html, 11.04.2018). But according to North Korea, only 13 out of 17 were abducted by its agents in the 70s and 80s (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/03/world/asia/north-korea-kidnap-japanese-trump.html>, 12.04.2018). So, Japan's stance about the abduction issue is very tight.

The investigations made by the Japanese authorities and the testimonies of the defected North Korean agents has uncovered the issue. For years North Korea had denied any involvement in the abduction issue but later at the First Japan-DPRK summit in 2002, North Korea accepted that they had abducted the

Japanese citizens and apologized for the events (www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kp/page1we_000067.html, 11.04.2018).

In the beginning of the 21st century, North Korea played a vital role in ensuring Japan's own security and maintaining stability in the region. With the North Korean missile launch over Japan which happened in 1998, raised insecurity among Japanese. Other incidents that made Japan to feel insecure were North Korea's acceptance of a highly enriched uranium (HEU) program and the decision to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2002 (Akaha,2007;298).

Japan establishes economic relations with North Korea because it wants to be an important player on the Korean Peninsula and North Korea wants to establish strong economic ties with Japan so that it would give North Korea a potential for a political leverage over Japanese government. Japan uses economic diplomacy and sanctions against North Korea as a part of its strategy on its own national security. The trade volume between Japan and North Korea has steadily dropped from \$370 million in 2002 to \$120 million in 2006. Even though the total trade between Japan and North Korea has never constituted more than %0.1 of Japan's total trade, this amount was important for North Korea. And just after the nuclear test in 2006, Japan applied harsh sanctions against North Korea, such as prohibiting car sales to North Korea, aborting all types of business conducted by Japan companies and the imports of hard (stone) coal from North Korea (Heijmans,2010; 380,381).

The two countries have a rivalry for each other which has roots from the beginning of the colonial rule. The Japan-North Korea relations are shaped generally by sentimental incidents that took place both in the colonial rule of Japan and in the abduction issues which is very important for Japanese public. The nuclear incidents that make Japan feel insecure are also a driving force for Japan's policy towards North Korea. Given these events, Japan became the best ally of USA in the region and Japan became a close ally with South Korea although they have a mutual bad history.

3.4. USA

The Asia-Pacific region is becoming an important area for US objectives. The region is the leading developing section of the world where accounts 60% of global economic growth, US exports to Far East Asia creates more jobs than the rest of the world and the region comprises of allies of USA and the most proximate threat to US national security (<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-case-for-continued-american-leadership-in-asia/>, 22.04.2018). Furthermore, North Korea's national security strategy is shaped by US and its allies' strategy in the region and how North Korea comprehends the moves of USA and its regional allies (Pak,2017;2).

As known, the US diplomacy towards North Korea is both coercive about nuclear proliferation and punitive in economic terms. Why USA is so concerned with the world's most isolated country? Is it the fear of the nuclear weapons which might allegedly be fired at US soil and US allies in the region or is it about the will of USA to control Far East Asia, strengthen its military presence and encircle Russia and China from both east and south? Is North Korea an excuse for USA in order to achieve her goals in the region? What is the driving force behind US policy towards North Korea? Before answering all these questions, two errors that are made by USA should be underlined; embracing exaggerated claims about need to act in North Korea and devising a conceptual magic wand to eradicate the potential effects of the war (http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/05/opinions/north-korea-mazarr-opinion/index.html?adbsc=social_20171014_1864221&adbid=919008108063555584&adbpl=tw&adbpr=22545453., 19.04.2018).

US President Donald Trump has been seeing North Korea as the greatest threat for national security (Pak,2017;3) and addressed North Korea on August 2017 that if North Korea keeps threatening US and her allies they would meet the worst destruction never seen before (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/world/asia/north-korea-un-sanctions-nuclear-missile-united-nations.html>, 15.04.2018) but this rhetoric obviously has a negative and unintended effect on North Korea given that Kim Jong-Un strengthens his

administration, so this rhetoric could actually mean as a warning for China and Russia because Russia and China are developing advanced weapons that could strike important US facilities (National Security Strategy of the United States,2017;8) and an excuse for US citizens to back the administration up while deploying more and more US troops in South Korea, and Japan. As the US National Security Strategy says about North Korea;

“North Korea is ruled as a ruthless dictatorship without regard for human dignity. For more than 25 years, it has pursued nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in defiance of every commitment it has made. Today, these missiles and weapons threaten the United States and our allies. The longer we ignore threats from countries determined to proliferate and develop weapons of mass destruction, the worse such threats become, and the fewer defensive options we have.” (National Security Strategy of the United States,2017;26)

Unlike his predecessors, both Clinton, Bush and Obama, Trump has changed US policy towards North Korea. The previous administrations provided food and energy assistance to North Korea, but Trump administration seems to have given up this policy and has started to use stick rather than carrot to solve North Korean issue (Nakano,2003;40). Therefore, USA uses her powerful “stick”, her army, in the region and justifies herself by saying that all those military and political actions are for denuclearized Korean Peninsula, but the real aim is to limit Russia’s and China’s area of interest and area of influence. The US ex-Secretary of State confessed the US aim to the press that *“we do not seek regime change; we do not seek the collapse of regime we do not seek an accelerated reunification of the peninsula; we do not seek an excuse to send our military north of the 38th parallel.”* (Einhorn,2017;3).

On the other hand, North Korea claims that USA has deployed nuclear weaponry around the world since the Cold War, which is seen as a hostile strategy by sovereign states, and also says that they are willing to complete the removal of

nuclear weapons but due to US nuclear weapons they cannot sign any treaty regarding denuclearization (<http://www.pyongyangtimes.com.kp/?page=Affairs&no=25256>., 17.04.2018). As Kim Jong-Un expressed on March 31, 2013, at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Worker's Party of Korea;

“When one is firmly equipped with the capability to make precision strikes with nuclear weapons against aggressors and strongholds of aggression, no matter where they are on the face of the earth, no aggressor can dare to attack recklessly, and the greater and more powerful the nuclear strike capability, the greater the power of deterring aggression will be. Especially in the case of our country, whose opponent is the United States...it is necessary to firmly bolster the nuclear armed forces both quantitatively and qualitatively.” (Pak,2017;8-9)

In other words, North Korea possesses nuclear weapons because USA has nuclear weapons that can strike them any time and Donald Trump gives the best excuse for North Korea's nuclear ambitions (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/world/asia/north-korea-un-sanctions-nuclear-missile-united-nations.html>, 17.04.2018). And some experts think that the main determination of Kim Jong-Un is regime survival (http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/05/opinions/north-korea-mazarr-opinion/index.html?adbsc=social_20171014_1864221&adbid=919008108063555584&adbpl=tw&adbpr=22545453., 19.04.2018), which is plainly expressed by Kim Jong-Un in his 2018 New Year Speech;

“North Korea, as a peace-loving nuclear power...will not use a nuclear weapon as long as the aggressive hostile forces do not infringe upon our country's sovereignty and interests and will not threaten any country or region with nuclear [weapons.] However, we will resolutely respond to any act of destroying peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.” (Pak,2017;9)

When North Korea feels threatened especially by USA, it grips nuclear weapons given that North Korea shares the peninsula with the most powerful state -USA- in the world (Anderson, 2017;622) as North Korea's primary aim for maintaining its nuclear and ballistic missile program is to dissuade US attack and invasion (Pak and Haas, 2017;2). But at the same time just like Donald Trump, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un uses US rhetoric messages to justify his dictatorship by creating an "adversary" for North Korean people (Pak and Haas, 2017;2).

There are lots of policy options for USA about compelling North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile program such as applying economic and diplomatic pressure in order to freeze its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and in the long term to make North Korea a denuclearized state by the help of China, North Korea's best ally in the world (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/averting-catastrophe-u-s-policy-options-for-north-korea/>., 15.04.2018) but none of them will be useful to get North Korea on her knees because USA needs an "adversary" for its goals in the region and to control both Russia and China, and Kim Jong-Un needs an "adversary" to justify his administration. North Korea is on the opinion that a nuclear attack against US soil or US allies in the region would cause a regime-ending response by USA. So, Kim Jong-Un uses nuclear threat in order to weaken US alliance with South Korea and Japan and keeping China's back up (Pak and Haas, 2017;2). At the same time, US military leaders think that the use of force towards North Korea would lead to major war in the peninsula and cause intolerable damages to the countries in the region and could escalate the probability of the use of nuclear weapons (Einhorn,2017;3). There are two main reasons why USA would not deal with North Korea by using of force; first the whereabouts of the nuclear arsenal is unknown and the second one is that a serious war in the peninsula could have severe implications for the region and might be opposed by US allies in the region (Ayson and Taylor, 2010;264). There is another side, the financial side, of the war and the post-war era. To illustrate, according to US congressional estimates, the costs of war and the reconstruction of Iraq after the war are between \$237 million and \$418 million. Approximately, 150.000 US soldiers were in the Iraqi

theatre in its peak time. A war with North Korea could exceed far more than the financial and military situation in Iraq. According to estimates, USA could suffer 80.000 to 100.000 soldiers in the first 90 days the war and the financial burden could be up to \$1 trillion, which means an unsustainable war for USA (Ayson and Taylor,2010;264-265). The intelligence gathering process is not working when North Korea is considered given that North Korea is the most isolated country in the world. But North Korea knows whatever they want to learn about USA given that North Koreans read US media and thus they know about what US is capable of. It can be said that North Korea will not stop testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles unless USA makes a big stride on behalf of North Korea (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/dont-be-surprised-by-north-koreas-missiles-theyre-doing-what-they-said-they-would/2017/08/31/e2fb9ebc-8e26-11e7-a2b0-e68cbf0b1f19_story.html?utm_term=.b43f1ade6715., 17.04.2018), which is impracticable at the moment.

The outcome of a new war with North Korea could be catastrophic given that USA would face not only with conventional weapons but also with nuclear weapons and the loss of human lives and a reputation loss in the international politics would be fatal for USA, more than Iraq, Vietnam and Afghanistan (http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/05/opinions/north-korea-mazarr-opinion/index.html?adbsc=social_20171014_1864221&adbid=91900810806355584&adbpl=tw&adbpr=22545453., 19.04.2018). In Iraq, the invasion lasted in one year, but the insurgency has developed and continued since then. Furthermore, the chaos has spread all over Iraq and terrorism and fanaticism has broken out given the system collapse. After 15 years, the situation in Iraq is still unsolved and complicated (Revere,2018;2) and the situation in North Korea, if an invasion by US occurs, will be worse than both Iraq and Afghanistan given that the unknowns about the real military and the informal power is unpredictable.

The first devised plan for a preemptive war against North Korea was in 1994 by Clinton administration. The plan was about to add another 10.000 US soldiers in South Korea, sending Apache attack helicopters in South Korea and

Bradley fighting vehicles in South Korea. But then it was thought that if a preemptive attack launched against North Korea, North Korean army would retaliate the attack not only by conventional weapons but also by nuclear weapons. A nuclear war in the name of denuclearization (Cumings, 2015;68). Therefore, because of the financial, social and operational difficulties, a war between North Korea and USA seems unfeasible.

US strategy towards North Korea, which is a carrot-stick approach comprises of energy assistance, economic aid and security guarantees and is valid only if North Korea ceases nuclear program, is not working. If a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula wanted, then security guarantees and economic aid should be given to North Korea, which is North Korea's primary goal. The only option for North Korea to freeze its nuclear program, if not abandon, big carrots should be at North Korea's disposal (Nakano,2003;38). But whatever aid is provided to North Korea, she will not abandon nuclear program given that, as aforementioned, Kim Jong-Un needs nuclear program to consolidate his administration. The world should learn to live with nuclear North Korea but USA does not accept North Korea as a nuclear state given that the US aim is "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea (<https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/north-koreas-testing-decade>, 19.04.2018).

Donald Trump has changed the US strategy towards Far East Asia and now he is engaging with Russia in the Middle East and he wants to encircle both Russia and China from the east. China is in search of economic dominance across East Asia and to achieve economic dominance, China has deployed outposts in the South China Sea so, this raises the regional tensions (Coats,2017;16). The previous US presidents had engaged with different parts of the world. Bill Clinton sent US troops to Bosnia long after the war had started, George W. Bush sent US troops to first Afghanistan and then Iraq, the countries which he described "the axis of evil" as well as North Korea (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm, 18.04.2018) in the name of war with terror, and Barack Obama resumed the expansionist policy in his first term in the office.

This expansionist policy is to control oil and other mineral rich areas such a Middle East and North Africa and of course the historical goal of controlling Russia from both west and east. While USA engaged with Europe, Middle East and North Africa, she gave some assistance in order to keep North Korean state on foot given that a regime collapse in North Korea would cause massive problems, the refugee influx both to China and South Korea and the risk of loosing control of the nuclear and ballistic weaponry, especially the fear of falling those precious and fatal weapons into the terrorist and other states that are hostile to USA.

In 1994, USA and North Korea reached agreement and signed an Agreed Framework. With the agreement, North Korea accepted to shut down its nuclear program in exchange of two light water reactors and heavy fuel oil. By 2003, USA had provided over \$400 million in heavy fuel oil to North Korea. In the fall of 2002, USA stopped the assistance given that North Korea had been secretly developing a uranium-based program, which is used for nuclear weapons as reported (Manyin and Nikitin,2014;1). In 2005, North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for incentives from other countries (Kerr, 2006;35). North Korea's another precondition for abandoning its nuclear program was to lift financial sanctions on the Macau based Banco Delta Asia, which was used for money laundering on behalf of North Korea to meet the costs of nuclear program according to USA but the proposal for lifting the financial sanctions on Banco Delta Asia was rejected by US administration (Kerr, 2006;35).

In February 10, 2006, North Korea announced that they are obliged to bolster its nuclear arsenal to protect its regime and ideology (<https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/north-koreas-testing-decade>, 19.04.2018) and tested its first nuclear weapon, resulting economic sanctions on North Korea. Next year, in 2007, USA participated in a regulation, which is chaired by China, and North Korea agreed to shut down her Yongbyon nuclear reactor and allowed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections in exchange for fuel and economic assistance (The American Journal of International Law, Vol:101,2007;499). Whenever North Korea seeks economic assistance, it uses its nuclear program to

get the economic aid and whenever North Korea bolsters its nuclear program it faces harsh sanctions, whose timeline is shown in the Table 1.



Table 1: The Timeline of the Sanctions on North Korea (https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea?utm_medium=social_earned&utm_source=tw&utm_campaign=backgrounder&utm_term=what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea&utm_content=100917., 19.04.2018)

As of Donald Trump administration, this policy has changed, because USA is now eager to apply its expansionist strategy on Northeast Asia. This strategy change also has bothered South Korea, of whose officials frequently said that *both USA and South Korea were not only on the same page with USA but also on the same paragraph and the same sentence* (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/us-rok-alliance-and-trump-administration>., 19.04.2018).

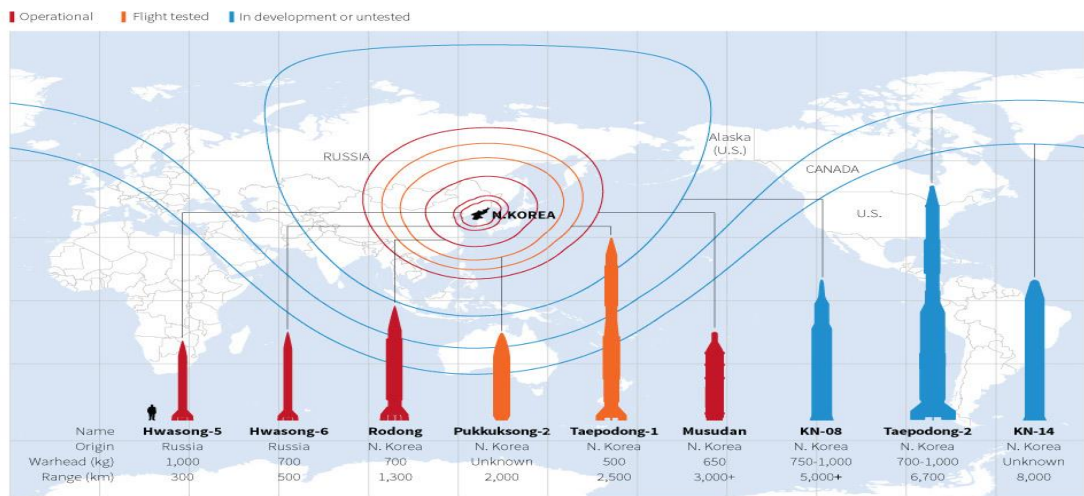
4. NUCLEAR WAR: A NIGHTMARE OR REAL?

The main threat which underlies North Korea's nuclear weapons program is the ability of North Korea's to put a nuclear war head on the tip of a missile (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/reports-north-korea-may-nuclear-warhead-fits->

[inside-missile](#), 22.04.2018) and how far it can travel. North Korea has developed its ballistic missile program thoroughly for years and has achieved uranium enrichment used for developing nuclear weapons by the help of Pakistani scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, who allegedly gave 20 centrifuges for uranium enrichment and spare parts for ballistic missile (<https://www.dawn.com/news/153780>, 22.04.2018).

North Korean missile range

Nuclear testing is part of a process that moves Pyongyang closer to miniaturising nuclear warheads to mount on intercontinental ballistic missiles. North Korea has well over 1,000 missiles of various ranges. Below is a comparison of North Korea's ballistic missiles' range and capabilities.



Notes: Ranges of KN-08 and KN-14 show minimum estimates from CSIS; Taepodong-2 shows designed range but could travel further with lightened payload. Sources: The Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense; National Intelligence Service; South Korea; Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS); Reuters. C. Tinton, W. Cai, 24/03/2017

REUTERS

Table 2 North Korean missiles (Allen, Bush, Einhorn, Pifer, Pollack and Revere, 2017)

Apart from nuclear power, North Korea has a huge army about quantity, if not quality, when its compared with both US army and South Korean army. Compared to 1.5 million men-powered North Korean army, South Korean army has only 485.000 soldiers and it is believed that this number would reduce to 370.000 soldiers in the coming years (<https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/09/beyond-strategic-patience-with-north-korea-what-comes.html>, 22.04.2018). If a war breaks out between North Korea and South Korea, thousands of soldiers would be struck and would be fighting each other in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in a short time period. North Korea has thousands of artillery units which are stationed just by the DMZ and could strike thousands of artillery munitions at the same time to Seoul. This massive offense would cause thousands of casualties not only from the Korean people but also Japan would be affected same casualties given US troops that are stationed in Japan (Allen, Bush, Einhorn, Pifer, Pollack and Revere, 2017; 5-6).

North-South Korean border area



Picture 1 North-South Korea Border Area (Allen, Bush, Einhorn, Pifer, Pollack and Revere, 2017)

North Korea plays a vital role not only given the nuclear threat it possesses but also it is China's south "door" and is very important for China to be a "buffer zone" between USA backed South Korea and China. As aforementioned before, US grand strategy is to encircle Russia and China but there is another economic point in US strategy. According to estimations done by experts, China will be the world's largest economy and will have overtaken US as world's largest economy by 2030 (<http://fortune.com/2017/02/09/study-china-will-overtake-the-u-s-as-worlds-largest-economy-before-2030/>, 21.04.2018). So, China is more important rival than Russia for being world hegemony. If China wanted to be controlled, then North Korea should be denuclearized and be unified under South Korea's leadership. By doing so, US military presence would be stationed just a few miles away from Chinese border. That's why China acts and provides aid though sanctions reluctantly on behalf of North Korea. As for North Korea, her main strategy is to maintain her sovereignty under the leadership of Kim family. In order to achieve this goal, North Korea has placed a high priority on the development of nuclear program, which is

allegedly aimed at only for self-defense and to dissuade US to invade North Korea according to Kim Jong-Un's 2018 new year speech (<https://www.38north.org/2018/01/rfrank010318/>., 21.04.2018), while developing economy at the same time and sustaining big conventional army (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/regime-insecurity-or-regime-resilience-north-koreas-grand-strategy-in-the-context-of-nuclear-and-missile-development/>., 21.04.2018). Unlike Kim Jong-Un's predecessors, his grandfather and his father, he has rejected any engagement about North Korea's nuclear program and any talks with USA and especially China, who is the fundamental source of political and economic assistance. Seemingly this is a great strategy shift in North Korea but Kim Jong-Un has moved this strategy one step further. Kim Jong-Un's grandfather and father steadily used denuclearization to gain foreign economic aid for North Korea, but as he said in his 2018 new year speech that his country's nuclear program cannot be negotiated under any condition (<https://www.38north.org/2018/01/rfrank010318/>., 21.04.2018), he set his policy to be recognized as a nuclear state and show the world that he can even bully the US president (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/regime-insecurity-or-regime-resilience-north-koreas-grand-strategy-in-the-context-of-nuclear-and-missile-development/>.,21.04.2018), sits on the same table with US president because Kim Jong-Un knows that his country is the "key" for US goals in the Far East Asia. Despite US military presence and power in Far East Asia, impoverished and isolated North Korea shows herself as a country who can undermine and pressurizes worlds most advanced and strongest country to the world (Pak,2017;6).

Although Kim Jong-Un addressed in his 2018 New Year Speech North Korea's nuclear program cannot be negotiated under any conditions, CIA Director Mike Pompeo and other high ranking US officials (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/17/world/asia/trump-japan-north-korea-summit-talks.html>, 22.04.2018) who met Kim Jong-Un are ratified that Kim Jong-Un was willing to negotiate denuclearization with Donald Trump in the planned summit, which is likely to take place by early June (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-china-trade-dispute-looms-over-trump-summit-with-japans-abe/2018/04/17/2c94cb02-424f-11e8-bba2->

[0976a82b05a2_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f18891e3006b](http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/chinas-president-xi-jinping-and-north-korean-leader-kim-jong-un-hold-talks-in-beijing), 22.04.2018).

Kim Jong-Un also pledged to Chinese President Xi Jinping that denuclearization is not a dream if USA and South Korea shows their good will and create a peace atmosphere and stability towards North Korea. And also Kim Jong-Un said that denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was also the will of his grandfather and father (<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/chinas-president-xi-jinping-and-north-korean-leader-kim-jong-un-hold-talks-in-beijing>., 22.04.2018).

The term denuclearization should not be understood of which only North Korea would give up her nuclear arsenal and nuclear program. The reality behind denuclearization is that North Korea would consider abandon her nuclear program and relinquish her nuclear arsenal only if USA moves away her soldiers stationed in both South Korea and draws away “nuclear umbrella” of deterrence from South Korea and Japan, which are unacceptable by USA. This is what exactly China wants given that China, although objects a nuclear North Korea, doesn’t want North Korea’s regime collapse, which would cause massive refuge flow into China and a possible US troops in its border. So, as Chinese President Xi Jinping said on March 28, 2018 *“No matter how international and regional situation changes, we will both firmly grasp the global development trend and overall situation of the China-DPRK relationship, strengthen our high-level exchanges, deepen our strategic communication, expand our exchanges and cooperation, and benefit the people of both countries and the people of all countries.”*(<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/chinas-president-xi-jinping-and-north-korean-leader-kim-jong-un-hold-talks-in-beijing>., 22.04.2018)

5. NORTH KOREAN MILITARY POWER AND NUCLEAR DETERRENCE CAPABILITY

Given that North Korea regards USA as the foremost adversary for its presence, most of its armed forces are stationed under Pyongyang.



Figure 1 North Korean Army Disposition

As understood from Figure 1, almost %70 of North Korean military forces and %80 of its artillery power has been deployed within the 100 km of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). In order to maintain North Korean army, administration has declared an annual defense budget of %15.5 of the government budget, in other words %30 of its gross national product (GNP) (Scobell and Sanford,2017;23). While its people have been suffering from hunger, North Korean leaders have constantly consumed country's national income to build up huge and strong army. North Korean army consists of 945,000 active and 5,500,000 reserve personnel. Its air force has 742 aircrafts, 202 helicopters, army has 5,243 tanks, 9,935 armored personnel carriers, 6550 artillery, navy has 967 navy assets (https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=north-korea, 17.05.2018). Much as North Korea has a great number of conventional weapons, most of those weapons are obsolete. North Korea still uses old Russian T-34/85 tanks, which were used during WW2, in service. But most likely those obsolete tanks are used for infantry support and defensive role in shelters (<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/would-north-korea-use-old-world->

[war-ii-tanks-fight-america-22646.](#), 17.05.2018). In addition to T34 tanks, North Korea also uses Russian T-54/55/59 and T-62 obsolete tanks.

Given that most of its weapons systems are obsolete, North Korea seems to have decided nuclear and ballistic deterrence towards its adversaries. In addition to North Korea's conventional military units, North Korean army also possesses Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles.

North Korea's Ballistic Missiles



Sources: CSIS Missile Defense Project; Nuclear Threat Initiative; Demeshko Alexandr/Shutterstock; David Wright.

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Figure 2 North Korean Army Ballistic Missiles

(<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/north-koreas-military-capabilities>, 17.05.2018)

General Leon J. LaPorte, the commander of the US forces in South Korea in 2004, told that North Korea had been investing on nuclear, biological, chemical and missile programs to gain advantage over US and South Korean forces (Hildreth,2009;3) because, as aforementioned above, even though North Korean military systems (both military units and weapons systems) are substantial in terms of quantity, the quality of those systems are no match to US and South Korean forces, except artillery units. While North Korean army's capability to maintain an offensive attack against South Korea is doubtful, with the artillery units located just north of the DMZ North Korean army can cause collateral damage on Seoul and thousands of people may lose their life in the first hours of an artillery attack (Sanford,2007; xii). Another conventional power of North Korean army is her Special Forces whose number has reached of 100,000 personnel (Pinkston,2008;5). To illustrate North Korean Special Forces' strength, in January 1968, a group of North Korean Special Forces soldiers had infiltrated Seoul and tried to penetrate the Blue House (the residence of South Korea's president) before they were detected and defeated (Scobell,2005;23).

North Korean nuclear program began in 1950s by the assistance of USSR on a nuclear research program near Yongbyon where North Korea's first nuclear reactor began operating in 1967 (Nikitin,2013;1). The material requiring making a nuclear warhead is the fissile material named plutonium 239 or highly enriched uranium (HEU). North Korea has the capability of industrial-scale uranium mining, refining and transforming to uranium (Nikitin,2013;3). By 2009, North Koreans emphasized that they had weaponized 30.8 kg amount of plutonium and could be used in warheads. North Koreans also emphasized that they would not let an inspection for warheads (Nikitin,2013;5). Although North Koreans told that they had weaponized plutonium, the second nuclear test in May 25, 2009 in Punggyri test site, raised doubt whether the test was a nuclear test. After the test noradionuclide was detected after the blast. On the other hand, the lack of radionuclide does not mean that the blast was non-nuclear. North Koreans might have buried the device

deep enough not to be detectable so, this makes it more difficult to assess the blast as a nuclear one or non-nuclear one (Chung,2016;87).

It is believed that North Korea learned centrifuge technology which is fundamental for processing and the nuclear know-how from Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan (<https://www.cfr.org/background/north-koreas-military-capabilities..>, 19.05.2018) who confessed in 2004 having supplied nuclear technology and expertise to North Korea (<https://www.dawn.com/news/153780.>, 19.05.2018). But his laboratory had been working only on uranium enrichment, not other steps of nuclear weaponization (<https://www.dawn.com/news/153780.>, 19.05.2018). North Korea has devoted itself to produce WMD's that about 3000 research personnel has worked for Yongbyon program and they have been living isolated from outer world in a self-contained complex (Scobell and Sandorf,2007;77).

North Korea initially launched Taepo Dong ballistic missile program in the beginning of 1990s. Taepo Dong 1 is believed to deliver a 1000 to 1500 kg warhead to a range of 1500 to 2500 km while Taepo Dong 2 can deliver the same amount of warhead to a range of a 4000 to 8000 km. By the end of 1999, it is estimated that North Korea might have produced approximately ten Taepo Dong 1 and one or two Taepo Dong 2 prototypes. It is believed that North Korea had foreign assistance from China, Russia, Pakistan and Iran (Hildreth,2009;1). In order to fit nuclear warhead into a ballistic missile, North Korea continues to progress the miniaturization technology (Chung,2016;84).

North Korea tested its longest-range missile test on 28th November 2017 in order to show its first-strike and retaliation capability to the world. The missile, which was also confirmed by the US Defense Department, flew over 600 miles and reached to the peak of 2,900 miles above the surface for more than 50 minutes. The high trajectory suggested that the missile could have up to 8,000 mile-range and could put Washington D.C. under threat (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/11/28/north-korea-launches-biggest-icbm-yet-despite-u-s-sanctions/?platform=hootsuite.>,

20.05.2018). Given the North Korea's last ballistic missile test, US Navy has been positioned in the Pacific, specifically positioned near Guam. The operating US Navy in the region has Aegis frigates, which are equipped with interceptors for ballistic missiles (<https://www.cfr.org/background/can-ballistic-missile-defense-shield-guam-north-korea>., 20.05.2018).

The reason why North Korea builds intercontinental ballistic missiles is simple. Imagine that North Korea invades South Korea, which is the foremost fear of USA and the reason of US nuclear umbrella in the region. In this situation, there will be two options for USA. The first one is to engage and retaliate and the other is one doing nothing. If USA chooses to strike North Korea as a retaliation, then it will risk New York over a fight in Seoul, and if USA chooses to do nothing, then it will risk its best ally in the region (Chung,2016;116). There are so much "if" and "uncertainty" regarding whether North Korea would use its nuclear weapons or not and whether USA would strike North Korea in the name of denuclearizing it.

6. CONCLUSION

The importance of North East Asia, as well as US vital interests, can be described with numbers. North East Asia, in other words Asia-Pacific, is home nearly 40% of world population and almost 60% of global gross domestic product (GDP), and states that have strong economic ties with USA, comprises of 60% of US trade. This region contains six nuclear states including North Korea, and three of the world's six largest defense budgets and six of the world's largest militaries (Chung,2016;115).

The question whether North Korea would give up its nuclear program. The answer is "no". Given the hardships that North Korea has gone through during the development of nuclear program, the consolidation of the dictatorship and, which is the most important, the lessons learned from Iraq and Libya, whom abandoned their nuclear and ballistic missile program and caused the devastation of those countries. Even the US President Donald Trump has emphasized this threat to North Korea (<https://www.msn.com/tr-tr/haber/dunya/kuzey-kore'ye-gözdağı-trump-libya'yı-yerle->

bir-ettik/ar-BB4wb6W?ocid=spartanntp, 20.05.2018). North Korea will maintain its nuclear and WMD program as well as its conventional army to sustain the administration and not to be wiped out by its rivals.

Another critical question is whether North Korea would start a nuclear war. Again, the answer is “no”. North Korean leaders know that if a nuclear war starts because of them, North Korea will be wiped out from the world map. The second-strike capability of US and its allies overrun that of North Korean both conventional, nuclear capability and ability. North Korea cannot last a nuclear or a conventional war forever. North Korea may be a “rogue state”, as US calls, but it is not an “unlogic” state. Every policy, action or strategy that North Korea pursues are mostly logic decisions.

The purposes of USA and its allies in the North Asia region has always coincided that of China and Russia's. So, Korean peninsula has been a battle ground for big powers since the end of WW2. North Korea seeks energy and food assistance as well as security assurance for its survival and China has given all of these to North Korea to protect its buffer against US backed South Korea. Though sometimes Chinese and North Korean relations are at stake, North Korea is still vital for China in the region.

As for the result, North Korea is not likely to abandon its nuclear weapons despite the latest progress in denuclearizing North Korea. This is the visible part of the iceberg. Having seen in the past, North Korea has secret weapons development sites, which are still unknown to the rest of the world. The world should learn to live with a nuclear North Korea and the point should be to integrate North Korean economy and public with the rest of the world.

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