

II. North Korea's nuclear programme

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On 12 February 2013 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) announced that it had successfully carried out a third underground nuclear test explosion in a tunnel at the Punggye-ri test site in North Hamgyong province in the north-east of the country. The announcement described the test as having 'diversified' North Korea's nuclear deterrent by using a smaller and lighter nuclear device with greater explosive force than those used in the test explosions conducted in 2006 and 2009.¹ North Korea's claim to have tested a miniaturized nuclear device could not be independently verified.² It was also not possible to determine, based on samples of radioactive gas collected after the test, whether the nuclear device used highly enriched uranium (HEU) as the fissile material or plutonium, which North Korea was believed to have used in the two previous tests.³

According to North Korea's official news agency, the test had been carried out to 'defend the country's security and sovereignty' against the 'ferocious hostile act of the U.S. which wantonly violated [North Korea's] legitimate right to launch satellite[s] for peaceful purposes'.⁴ This referred to the United States-sponsored United Nations Security Council Resolution 2087, adopted on 22 January 2013, which condemned North Korea's launch the previous month of a long-range rocket that had placed a satellite into orbit.⁵ North Korea reiterated its right under international law to use outer space for peaceful purposes and dismissed the resolution as the 'height of double-standards' for framing the launch of a scientific satellite as a long-range ballistic missile test.⁶ On 24 January North Korea's National Defence

¹ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'KCNA report on successful 3rd underground nuclear test', 12 Feb. 2013; and 'North Korea carries out biggest nuclear test', BBC News, 12 Feb. 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21421841>>. The KCNA is North Korea's state news agency; its statements are available on the website of the Korean News Service in Tokyo, <<http://www.kcna.co.jp/>>.

² Broad, W. J., 'A secretive country gives experts few clues to judge its nuclear program', *New York Times*, 12 Feb. 2013.

³ For details of the nuclear test explosion see chapter 6, section XI, in this volume. On the 2 earlier explosions, in Oct. 2006 and May 2009, see Fedchenko, V. and Ferm Hellgren, R., 'Nuclear explosions, 1945–2006', *SIPRI Yearbook 2007*; and Fedchenko, V., 'Nuclear explosions, 1945–2009', *SIPRI Yearbook 2010*.

⁴ Korean Central News Agency (note 1).

⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 2087, 22 Jan. 2013; and United Nations, Security Council, 'Security Councils condemns use of ballistic missile technology in launch by Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Resolution 2087 (2013)', Press Release SC/10891, 22 Jan. 2013, <<https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10891.doc.htm>>.

⁶ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'DPRK FM refutes UNSC's "resolution" pulling up DPRK over its satellite launch', 23 Jan. 2013. UN Security Council resolutions have prohibited North Korea

Commission warned that, in response to the ‘illegal resolutions’, the country would launch a ‘variety of satellites and long-range rockets’ as well as carry out a ‘higher level’ nuclear test, although it did not give a date for doing so.⁷ In 2006 and 2009 North Korea had responded to the UN Security Council’s condemnations of its long-range rocket launches with similar rhetoric, culminating in nuclear tests.

Reactions to the North Korean nuclear test and its aftermath

Although the third North Korean nuclear test explosion was not unexpected, its announcement drew sharp international condemnation. This included a protest from China, North Korea’s most important ally, which called on North Korea to ‘stop any rhetoric or acts that could worsen situations and return to the right course of dialogue and consultation as soon as possible’.⁸

After protracted discussions, on 7 March 2013 the UN Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 2094, which demanded that North Korea ‘abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner’, refrain from conducting further nuclear or ballistic missile tests, and rejoin the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state party.⁹ The new resolution was the fifth by the Security Council imposing sanctions on North Korea over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes (see table 7.2). It set out further measures to block financial transactions and bulk cash transfers in support of illicit North Korean activity. It also strengthened states’ authority to inspect suspicious cargo and to deny port and overflight access to North Korea-linked shipments.

North Korea rejected Resolution 2094 as another ‘cooked up’ measure in which the Security Council had been ‘abused for the implementation of the hostile policy of the U.S.’, aimed at undermining North Korea and its political system.¹⁰ On 8 March a statement carried by the state news agency

from such launches because the technology required for a satellite launch is directly applicable to ballistic missile development.

⁷ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), ‘DPRK NDC issues statement refuting UNSC resolution’, 24 Jan. 2013.

⁸ Chance, D. and Kim, J., ‘North Korean nuclear test draws anger, including from China’, Reuters, 12 Feb. 2013. For a comprehensive analysis of Chinese reactions see Duchâtel, M. and Schell, P., *China’s Policy on North Korea: Economic Engagement and Nuclear Disarmament*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 40 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Dec. 2013).

⁹ UN Security Council Resolution 2094, 7 Mar. 2013; and United Nations, Security Council, ‘Security Council strengthens sanctions on Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in response to 12 February nuclear test’, Press Release SC/10934, 7 Mar. 2013, <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10934.doc.htm>>. For a summary and other details of the NPT see annex A, section I, in this volume.

¹⁰ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), ‘Foreign Ministry slams UNSC’s additional “resolution on sanctions”’, 9 Mar. 2013.

Table 7.2. United Nations Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions over North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile activities

Date	Resolution	Main provisions
15 July 2006	1695	Condemned missiles launches on 5 July 2006; prohibited states from selling or transferring to North Korea material and technology for ballistic missiles or items related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
14 Oct. 2006	1718	Condemned 9 Oct. 2006 nuclear test; called on states to inspect cargo shipments to and from North Korea suspected of trafficking nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and related material; imposed trade and financial restrictions on entities linked to North Korea's nuclear programme; prohibited the export of certain luxury goods to North Korea; banned the sale, supply or transfer to North Korea of warships, battle tanks, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, large-calibre artillery and missiles or missile delivery systems; established a Sanctions Committee to monitor and review sanctions and report regularly to the Security Council
12 June 2009	1874	Condemned 25 May 2009 nuclear test; expanded sanctions to ban all weapon exports from North Korea and most imports except for small arms; prohibited financial transactions, technical training or assistance for the provision, manufacture, maintenance or use of WMD and missile systems; established a 7-person panel of experts to assist the Sanctions Committee established by Resolution 1718
22 Jan. 2013	2087	Condemned 12 Dec. 2012 long-range rocket launch; designated new subjects of sanctions measures previously adopted by the Security Council
7 Mar. 2013	2094	Condemned 12 Feb. 2013 nuclear test; added to the list of prohibited equipment and technologies and the list of entities and individuals subject to sanctions; authorized states to inspect all cargo within or transiting through their territories to and from North Korea

Source: UN documents for DPRK (North Korea), Security Council resolutions, Security Council Report, <<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/dprk-north-korea/>>.

announced a series of counter-steps by North Korea, including a declaration by the army's Supreme Command that the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement and all non-aggression pacts with South Korea were 'totally invalid'.¹¹ The North Korean statement also said that the military hotline, the last such link between the two countries, would be disconnected immediately.¹²

North Korea's announcement of the retaliatory measures was issued against the background of escalating tensions as the USA and the Republic

¹¹ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'Important measures to defend nation's sovereignty, dignity and country's supreme interests: CPRK', 8 Mar. 2013. North Korea had made similar declarations in 1994, 2003 and 2009.

¹² Korean Central News Agency (note 11).

of Korea (South Korea) began their annual joint military exercises. On 29 March 2013, following reports of US strategic bomber sorties over South Korea, North Korean state media reported that the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, had approved a plan to prepare missiles to be ready for firing at US targets, including the US mainland and military bases in the Pacific and in South Korea.¹³ While military analysts dismissed North Korea's ability to strike the US mainland with a ballistic missile, they did not rule out possible attacks on nearby targets.¹⁴ In response, the USA strengthened its missile defence capabilities in the region by deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) mobile missile interceptor system to Guam.¹⁵ Earlier in March, the US administration had announced plans to deploy by 2017 additional ground-based missile interceptors at two bases in Alaska and California. US officials said the decision was in part a political message intended to reassure allies in North East Asia that the USA was willing to commit significant defence resources to deter North Korea 'from acting irrationally'.¹⁶

Increased role for North Korea's nuclear weapons

On 2 April North Korea's General Department of Atomic Energy announced that it would be 'readjusting and restarting all the nuclear facilities' at its main nuclear complex at Yongbyon, North Pyongan province.¹⁷ The restarting of the Yongbyon facilities appeared to reflect a decision by the North Korean leadership to prioritize nuclear weapons as the central element in the country's defence planning and national security strategy.¹⁸ The stated purpose of the move was 'developing the self-reliant nuclear power industry' for generating electricity and 'bolstering up the nuclear armed force both in quality and quantity'.¹⁹ The twin goals were consistent with the new 'strategic line', the so-called Byongjin line, set out by Kim Jong Un in remarks at a plenary meeting of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee on 31 March.²⁰ The new line called for simultaneously

¹³ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'Kim Jong Un convenes operation meeting, finally examines and ratifies plan for firepower strike', 29 Mar. 2013.

¹⁴ Mullen, J. and Shoichet, C. E., 'North Korea readying rockets to aim at U.S. targets, state media says', CNN International, 29 Mar. 2013, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/03/28/world/asia/north-korea-us-threats/index.html>>.

¹⁵ 'North Korea threats: US to move missile defences to Guam', BBC News, 4 Apr. 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-22021832>>.

¹⁶ Shanker, T., Sanger, D. and Fackler, M., 'U.S. is bolstering missile defense to deter North Korea', *New York Times*, 15 Mar. 2013.

¹⁷ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'DPRK to adjust uses of existing nuclear facilities', 2 Apr. 2013. For a description of the Yongbyon facilities see chapter 6, section IX, in this volume.

¹⁸ Duchâtel and Schell (note 8), pp. 1–2.

¹⁹ Korean Central News Agency (note 17).

²⁰ 'Kim Jong Un's report and remarks at KWP Central Committee meeting 31 March 2013', North Korea Leadership Watch, <<http://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/kim-jong-un/kim-jong-un>>.

rebuilding the country's economy while building up its nuclear forces as the core of its so-called military-first (*songun*) policy. Kim explained that this simultaneous approach would 'further reinforce the country's defense capabilities with a small outlay without increasing national defense spending, while directing great efforts to the economic construction and the improvement of the people's living standards'.²¹ Kim emphasized that North Korea's nuclear weapons were indispensable for deterring US aggression and were not 'goods for getting U.S. dollars [or] a political bargaining chip . . . to be put on the table of negotiations aimed at forcing [North Korea] to disarm itself'.²²

Kim's remarks underscored the deep differences between his country on the one side and the USA, Japan and South Korea on the other, over the scope and sequencing of steps for beginning a dialogue aimed at reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula. On 14 April the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, indicated that the USA and its allies were willing to hold talks with North Korea but reiterated that it first had to stop making threats and take tangible steps to demonstrate that it was serious about denuclearization.²³

North Korea did not rule out the US overture for dialogue amid signs that it was seeking to reduce tensions.²⁴ However, a statement from its National Defence Commission on 18 April described as 'foolish and brigandish' the call for North Korea to 'show its "will for denuclearization"' before any talks could start.²⁵ The statement set out North Korea's conditions for a dialogue, including a demand that the UN Security Council must lift sanctions placed on North Korea's past nuclear and ballistic missile activities. Additionally, the USA would have to withdraw all 'nuclear war means' from the region and stop joint military exercises with South Korea. North Korea's conditions were immediately rejected by the USA and South Korea.²⁶

uns-report-and-remarks-at-kwp-central-committee-meeting-31-march-2013/>. On the Byongjin line see Duchâtel and Schell (note 8), p. 21.

²¹ 'Kim Jong Un's report and remarks at KWP Central Committee Meeting 31 March 2013' (note 20).

²² Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'Report on plenary meeting of WPK Central Committee', 31 Mar. 2013.

²³ Mohammed, A. and Takenaka, K., 'Kerry says U.S. ready to "reach out" to North Korea', Reuters, 14 Apr. 2013.

²⁴ Choe, S.-H. and Gladstone, R., 'North Korea tones down language, giving hope for dialogue', *New York Times*, 18 Apr. 2013.

²⁵ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'DPRK NDC Policy Department issues statement', 18 Apr. 2013.

²⁶ Jung, H.-W., 'North Korea lays out tough pre-conditions for talks', Agence France-Presse, 18 Apr. 2013.

Political and diplomatic developments

In the second half of 2013 relations between North and South Korea gradually improved, as both sides moved to defuse an increasingly tense confrontation that had raised fears of an armed conflict. In June South Korea accepted a proposal by North Korea to hold high-level talks—the first such inter-Korean dialogue in six years—on a range of joint ventures.²⁷ Although the talks were cancelled by North Korea following a disagreement over a protocol dispute, both countries expressed interest in re-establishing their cooperation.²⁸

At the same time, South Korea and the USA strengthened their military cooperation to address the threats posed by North Korea's nuclear weapon and ballistic missile capabilities. On 2 October they signed an agreement for a bilateral 'tailored deterrence' strategy against North Korea.²⁹ The new strategy reportedly called for large-scale pre-emptive strikes against North Korea if there were clear indications of an imminent nuclear attack by it.³⁰ However, according to South Korean media reports, South Korea rejected US efforts to deploy advanced ground-based missile interceptors and X-band radar systems in the country due to strong opposition from China.³¹

During the latter half of 2013 international efforts to revive the dormant Six-Party Talks made little progress. China took the lead in holding a series of discussions with the parties to explore options and conditions for resuming the talks.³² China also reportedly pressed North Korea to return to negotiations while simultaneously tightening enforcement of UN sanctions targeting North Korean financial transactions.³³ However, none of the parties showed signs of moving away from established positions for restarting multilateral negotiations to denuclearize North Korea.³⁴

²⁷ Choe, S.-H., 'South and North Korea agree to meet at a border village', *New York Times*, 7 June 2013.

²⁸ 'N. Korea calls off cross-border talks', *Chosun Ilbo*, 12 June 2013, <http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/06/12/2013061200901.html>.

²⁹ Parrish, K., 'U.S., South Korea announce "tailored deterrence" strategy', US Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service, 2 Oct. 2013, <<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120896>>.

³⁰ Alexander, D. and Kim, J., 'South Korea, U.S. sign new pact to deter North Korea nuclear threat', Reuters, 2 Oct. 2013.

³¹ 'SKorea–U.S. alliance under pressure from regional interests', *Chosun Ilbo*, 2 Oct. 2013, <http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/10/02/2013100201496.html>.

³² Zhang, Y., 'Restart Six-Party Talks, says FM', *China Daily*, 19 Sep. 2013; and 'Negotiators trying to restart six-party talks for North Korea's nuclear program', Japan Daily Press, 8 Nov. 2013, <<http://japandailynews.com/negotiators-trying-to-restart-six-party-talks-for-north-koreas-nuclear-program-0839225/>>. The Six-Party Talks, which began in Aug. 2003, are a forum for multilateral negotiations on North Korea's nuclear programme. The 6 parties are China (which chairs the talks), Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the USA.

³³ 'N. Korea seeks new talks on its nuclear program, China says', Bloomberg News, 20 June 2013.

³⁴ Davenport, K., 'N. Korea lays out conditions for talks', *Arms Control Today*, vol. 43, no. 9 (Nov. 2013). For a summary of the parties' main objectives and priorities in the Six-Party Talks see Bajoria, J. and Xu, B., 'The Six Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear program', Backgrounder, US Council on

Continued impasse

In 2013 the North Korean leadership reaffirmed its intention to retain nuclear weapons for the indefinite future amid escalating tensions following its third nuclear test explosion. It articulated a long-term strategy for augmenting the country's nuclear forces, both in terms of quantity and quality, in conjunction with the rebuilding of the economy. During the year Japan, South Korea and the USA emphasized that they would not accept North Korea's self-claimed status as a legitimate nuclear weapon-possessing state or agree to restart the stalled Six-Party Talks without a clear denuclearization commitment from North Korea. The year ended with little prospect of achieving a breakthrough in the diplomatic stalemate over North Korea's nuclear programme.