

North korea as a nuclear power

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It is now known that North Korea, continuing on the path of defying the international community, became a nuclear nation, or is close to becoming one within a short period of time, depending on a variety of factors.

The latest declaration of the North Korean government regarding conducting a nuclear test is bringing the chapter of this country in what concerns its relations with the rest of the world to its final phases.

According to Abramowitz and Lynch (2006), the White House wants the various members of the United Nations, especially those with permanent seats in the Security Council, to agree on immediate measures that can be considered as punitive actions against the government in Pyongyang. The two authors state that there are still doubts and questions concerning the “the strength and success of the reported North Korean explosion, but there was little doubt among White House officials, lawmakers and outside experts that the action added a volatile new ingredient to an already dangerous worldenvironment”.

The doubts concerning the test are caused by two factors: First, that the United States and other countries do not trust what the regime of North Korea says, and the second is what was stated by Naughton and Knight (2006) when they reported that the test was done through the detonation of bomb underground, and that the explosion caused an earthquake measuring about 3.6 on the Richter scale. This gives us an idea that the explosive device was of some size around 500 tonnes, which makes its power reach the equivalent of one-thirtieth of the power of the bomb deployed against the city of Hiroshima at the end of the World War II.

Even though there is total agreement between the permanent members of the Security Council to condemn this action, there are still certain doubts about the next steps to be taken. As it is widely known, North Korea is practically suffering from a regime of sanctions imposed on it by many countries (including the United States), but there are other elements to take into consideration. As Nichols (2006) reports, “ despite the hard-edged rhetoric, foreign policy analysts and nuclear experts pointed out the obvious: World powers have tried to bully, threaten, cajole, entice, sanction and sweet talk North Korea into the community of nations for 50 years, without success.”

This is a difficult reality to deal with, especially when we know that countries like China (and maybe Russia) are always reluctant whenever the discussions reach the point of severe sanctions. According to Jim Walsh, a North Korea expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the United States and Japan do not really have many options if China refuses to pass a strong resolution against North Korea (Nichols, 2006)

The image that we have about North Korea, according to Harrison (2006), is not a correct one. The country is politically stable and is growing economically. “ North Korea is stable and there is more economic activity in Pyongyang than I have ever seen—more cars and bicycles, better-dressed people, more restaurants, more small mom and pop stores, and above all more interest in making money.”

From this angle, we can understand why sanctions did not work in the past, and why it is possible that it would not work in the future; in addition to the fact that North Korean officials have already declared that “ sanctions

imposed by the US were a declaration of war, and had forced it [the government of North Korea] to go ahead with plans for testing.” The worrying factor here is the impact that is expected on the countries in the region: “ There are fears that a North Korean nuclear test could trigger a regional arms race. Japan could seek its own nuclear deterrent in a move that could aggravate historical tensions between Japan on one hand and China and South Korea on the other” (The Guardian).

The government in North Korea is a dictatorship that has a terrible record in what concerns human rights and the persecution of political opposition and with subjects related to public freedoms. When a regime like that is allowed (or not completely opposed) to possessing nuclear weapons, this would create a grave threat to the world and it should be taken seriously.

The duty of the international community is to responsibly deal with this responsibly, and to go through all the options that should stop the threat of a nuclear North Korea.

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