

KOREAN PEOPLE'S ARMY. THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE MILITARIZATION IN DPRK'S POLICY

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Abstract:

One of the least developed countries in the world, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), maintains extremely numerous armed forces. There are many aspects for political analyses in the context of the North Korean army. This problem is intensified, especially by complicated international situation in the region and the lack of comprehensive information on the actual state of affairs in the regime of Kim Jong-un. What is important in this matter, are the real capabilities of this army in the area of military equipment, training of soldiers, and advances of the technological research. In this context, the condition and prospects of development of the local economy which provides the funding for the army should be analyzed as well. After the changes in the political leadership which followed the death of Kim Jong-il, it is also worth considering, how the power of the army affects the prospects of the current regime. Analyzing the internal situation, the next important problem discussed is the meaning of North Korean generals for the duration of Kim Jong-un's regime. We should consider, whether the army would still be the protector of the present order, or if it could become the first factor of change, starting with it seizing power in the North Korea.

Keywords:

militarization, North Korea, conflict

INTRODUCTION

Northern Korea is a country full of contradictions. One of the least developed countries in the world, it is capable of maintaining of extremely large Armed Forces. A lot of questions can be raised in the context of the North Korean army. These are only ampli-

fied by a complicated political situation in the region, and lack of detailed and thorough information on the actual state of affairs under the Kim Jong-un's regime. What seems to be crucial here, are the real capabilities of the army, namely the materiel and equipment, quality of soldier's training and the advancement of Korean defence research. In order to obtain a full view of the situation, the current economic conditions and economic prospects should also be analyzed, as it is the economy which finances the army. After the change of power following the death of Kim Jong-il, it is also worth investigating, how the power of the army could shape the perspectives for the present regime, reflecting on international situation. While analyzing the internal policy of Northern Korea, one can encounter an interesting issue of the significance of generals for the current regime. Therefore what should also be considered is whether the army will continue to be the guardian of the existing order, in line with its role or, in the face of weaning support for the young leader, could it generate a spark and ignite a takeover.

1. PAINFUL EXPERIENCES OF THE PAST

The origins of militarisation and increase of the army's importance within the Korean political system should be sought in the past experiences of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The Japan occupation during which the Koreans experienced great suffering and prosecution was reflected in the political ideas developed later on, as well as the mentality of the citizens of North Korea¹. During this period, the residents of the peninsula were treated very brutally. Some authors even venture to call these actions a policy of extermination on the part of the occupant. Koreans were used as cheap labour force. Intensive Japanisation of the culture and language was also carried out, and the Korean language was publically banned². The works by Kim Jong-il mention that the liberation from the yoke of oppressors was the personal achievement of his father, as well as of the whole nations uniting. The fight for freedom took place in difficult circumstances, in spite of which a sovereign state could be formed³.

The policy of *Juche* introduced by Kim Il-sung was based on self-reliance and independence of the Korean nation, so it can be seen that its fundamentals had been quite sound. It was conceived in the hostility towards other countries and strong need for self-government, which Korea had been deprived by foreign countries for many years and which the Koreans had to fight for. This was also the background of the *Songun* idea. It is through the development of this idea that Northern Korea was to gain the guarantee of its own safety, integrity of its borders and political system. Maintaining the ideas of the Korean nation's self-reliance, *Songun* prioritizes the military issues and strengthening of the army in terms of the military technology, as well as ideology and politics. Kim Jong-il wrote: *Military power is the first basic power of our country, Our*

¹ K. Jong Il, *Koreańska Republika Ludowo-Demokratyczna – państwo socjalistyczne Juche o niezniszczalnej sile*, [online]. [available: 03.11.2014]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.krld.pl/krld/biblio/kimdzongil/krldniezniszczalne.pdf>, p. 18-20.

² E. Haliżak, *Znaczenie regionalnej równowagi sił dla zjednoczenia Korei*, [in:] *Korea – doświadczenia i perspektywy*, ed. K. Gawlikowski, E. Potocka, Toruń 2002, p. 158.

³ K. Jong Il, op. cit., p. 4-5.

*anti-imperialist, anti-American struggle is lead with devotion on all fronts: the political, military, economical, ideological and cultural ones, but the main one, one impacting the fate of the country and the nation, is an anti-imperialist military front (...). Imperialists can only be defeated using force. Without our force, without the powerful military force capable of self-defence, the fight against imperialism cannot be won; one will not be able to defend either the Party, or the country, one is not able to guarantee the safety of the nation – these are the harsh realities of today*⁴.

The 1950-1953 war is presented in the North Korean literature in similar manner. It is treated as the first challenge for the emerging country which the imperialistic United States wanted to destroy and subdue⁵. The survival of Northern Korea was therefore in their opinion the contribution of the army and the Supreme Leader Kim Ir-sung. Hence, using the fear founded in real experiences of difficult past, it was possible to create a myth in DPRK that a strong army is the safeguard of stabilization, maintaining the *status quo*, which although unsatisfactory, at least allows for the country to be protected against the spectre of occupation and violence inflicted by other countries. The North Korean in Chapter 4 also states that country shall implement the line of self-reliant defence. This is based on training the army and modernization of the army, arming the entire nation and fortifying the people politically and ideologically⁶. The current leader – Kim Jong-un – also shares these ideas. In his speech, he stated that it is the army which is the main force guaranteeing the security of Korea and the happiness of its people. He also reiterated that the forming the army by Kim Il-sung allowed it to become independent of external influences⁷. He further said that in order to build a strong socialist country they had to: *First, second and third strengthen the People's Army in all possible ways*⁸.

2. BUILDING A GREAT ARMY

Having traced the ideological reasons and historical conditions which influenced the militarisation of the country, it is worth to get insight into the genesis of forming the DPRK Armed Forces. After the division of Korea, the two countries immediately started to form their own armed forces. Officially, Korean People's Army was established on February 8th, 1948. In its beginning, it was controlled and trained by the USSR troops. Northern Korea received military equipment from the Soviet Union⁹. That is why the organization, training and methods of conducting warfare by the North Korean forces

⁴ Ibidem, p. 18-20.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 5-6.

⁶ *DPRK's Socialist Constitution*, [online]. [available: 03.11.2014]. Available on the Internet: http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/061st_issue/98091708.htm#Chapter 4:National Defense.

⁷ K. Jong Un, *Wyżej wznosząc sztandar Songun. Prężnym krokiem pójdziemy naprzód do ostatecznego zwycięstwa*, [online]. [available: 06.11.2014]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.krid.pl/krid/biblio/kimdzongun/Wyzej-wznoszac-sztandar-Songun.pdf>, p. 8, 12.

⁸ K. Jong Un, op. cit., p. 14.

⁹ H. T. Hodge, *North Korea's Military Strategy*, [online]. [available: 13. 04. 2015]. Available on the Internet: <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/03spring/hodge.pdf>.p. 74.

resembled Soviet modes and patterns of that period. Additionally, the highest dignitaries, along with Kim Il-sung underwent military trainings in the Soviet Union during World War 2 already¹⁰.

130 thousand soldiers served in the North in 1950. They were equipped with 150 T-24 tanks and 132 fighter planes, among other. The South Korean forces amounted to 110 thousand men. However, they did not have any tanks, heavy artillery or air force¹¹. The foremost goal of the developing North Korean military was to prepare a reunification of the Korean Peninsula by any means necessary. The conflict, however, only perpetuated the division of Korea and did not bring about any territorial changes¹². Nonetheless, after the war, the Northern Armed Forces were significantly weakened and they required modernization. Although in this difficult period restoration of economy was a priority, an intensive officer training program was introduced in parallel, along with increased professionalization of the army. In 1958, the DPRK military regained full military capability¹³.

Intensified militarisation policy started in the 1960s. In 1961 the percentage of military spendings relative to the budget equalled 2.6%, Five years later, it was 10% already, and in 1967-71 these spendings amounted to about 30%¹⁴. The goal was to prepare the entire population for warfare and to continue the dynamic process of professionalization of the army training. Advanced modernization of the Armed Forces was also intended. The next years saw further expansion of the military. After the fall of USSR, North Korea found itself, however, not only devoid of ideological support, but without the economic and military aid as well. In spite of this fact, a complex, 5-year plan of reorganization and strengthening of the army was introduced. The size of ground forces increased from 720 thousand in 1990 to 950 thousand four years later. Furthermore, the army presence near the Demilitarized Zone increased from 40% to 70% of total troop strength.¹⁵ When Kim Jong-il took over, as in later years, the policy did not change drastically. This is indicated by the 2009 defence budget which was to equal 15.8% GDP. However, one can speculate that the magnitude of additional, unofficial spendings for these purposes is at similar level¹⁶.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 74-76.

¹¹ J. Odziemkowski, *Międzynarodowe konflikty zbrojne po Drugiej Wojnie Światowej*, Warszawa 2006, p. 35-36.

¹² P. Ostaszewski, *Wojna Koreańska 1950-1953*, [in:] *Konflikty kolonialne i postkolonialne w Afryce i Azji 1869-2006*, (ed.) J. Lewiński, Warszawa 2006, p. 305-314.

¹³ W.J. Dziak, *Korea, pokój czy wojna?*, Warszawa 2003, p. 145.

¹⁴ R. Jakimowicz, *Półwysep Koreański a problem bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, [in:] *Międzynarodowe wyzwania bezpieczeństwa*, (ed.) K. Budzowski, Warszawa 2010, p. 195.

¹⁵ H. T. Hodge, op. cit., p. 74-76.

¹⁶ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 195.

North Korea is now considered the most militarized state on earth and the army is a vital element of its policy, both internal and the external one¹⁷. In a country of about 24 million, approximately 1.2 million are troops in the regular army. The number of soldiers in reserve is estimated to be 5 million.¹⁸ North Korea had thus the fourth largest army in the world, and it preceded by China, the United States, and India¹⁹. What is noteworthy, is that the North Korean army is smaller than the Chinese army only by half, and China is the most populated country in the world; its army is more numerous than the Russian army. At over 44 soldiers per one thousand population, it is said to have the highest degree of militarization of any country in the history of civilization²⁰. Nonetheless, the Korean Army had not undergone due modernization since the fall of the Soviet Union, and this may be a deciding factor, as far as its real capabilities are concerned²¹. The North Korean leaders, however, registered the need of modernizing the armed forces. It can be stated that there is a change in the approach to the military, a departure from a Soviet ideology, where the technological lag and the lagging training was to be compensated by the amount of the equipment and manpower. This is what Kim Jong-il wrote that *the cadres of the Korean People's Army should comprise talented young workers. Modern war is a total war, one which makes use of weapons and equipment based on state-of-the-art solutions in the field of science and technology. That is why the commander staff of the People's Army should be strengthened with talented, young people, capable of performing basic tasks in any, even the most complex, situation. Then and only then can the victory over the enemy be won*²².

However, he also states that the importance of the "political and ideological involvement" is visible on the battlefield mostly and it allows the people to overcome the technological advantage, as was the case with Americans during the Korean War. In his opinion, the staff should be composed of individuals devoted to the Party and the Great Leader fully and who feel a debt of gratitude towards the former and the latter also in the everyday life²³. A number of military schools and academies operate in the North Korea. The Kim Il-sung Military University is one of the most prominent educational centres. It offers advanced education and training for officers of all specializations²⁴. Some 40 percent of the populace serve in some military, paramilitary, or de-

¹⁷ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, *North Korea's Military Threat: Pyongyang's Conventional Forces, Weapons of Mass Destruction and Ballistic Missiles*, Washington 2007, p. VII.

¹⁸ H.T. Hodge, op. cit., p. 73.

¹⁹ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 196.

²⁰ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, op. cit., p. 5-6.

²¹ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 196.

²² R. L. Worden, *North Korea, a country study*, *North Korea, a country study* [online]. [available: 13. 04. 2014]. Available on the Internet: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pdf/CS_North-Korea.pdf, p. 263.

²³ K. Jong Il, *O umocnieniu Ludowej Armii i stworzeniu w społeczeństwie atmosfery priorytetu kwestii militarnej*, [online]. [available: 29.11.2014]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.krld.pl/krld/biblio/kimdzongil/umocnieniu.pdf>, s. 3-4.

²⁴ R.L. Worden, op. cit. s. 263.

fence-related industry and can be mobilized easily for war, should such need arise²⁵. Most citizens who are between 14 and 17 years of age have the first contact with these formations. Boys and girls can then join the Red Youth Guard, with some 940,000 members. The training includes physical training, drill and ceremony, first aid, and weapons familiarization. The military reserve members undergo 15 days of mobilization training and 15 days of self-defence training²⁶. North Korea also has a significant military industry. There are about 180 arms factories, 40 gun factories of varying calibres, 10 armoured vehicle factories, 10 naval shipyards, and 50 munitions factories. Many of these factories are constructed underground. Additionally, more than 115 non-military factories have a dedicated wartime materiel production²⁷. North Korea produces armed vehicles, artillery equipment, submarines, amphibian vehicles, biological and chemical weapons. The majority of military equipment and weapons, however, is not technologically advanced²⁸. This can be illustrated by the fact that during a military parade dummy missiles were used²⁹. In spite of this fact, Kim Jong-il wrote in one of his texts that North Korea is capable of producing modern military equipment and weapons. It is due to this production that the armament of the nation and the transformation of the whole country into a stronghold is to progress. This publication also touches the need of consolidating the army and the nation³⁰.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE REAL POTENTIAL

In contemporary times, the sole number of troops is not necessary a testament to the power of the military. Therefore what should be considered, is what equipment and military technology is really at the disposal of North Korea, and what is the threat posed by it to the international community? The land forces include 9 infantry corps, 4 mechanized corps 4 and tank corps, one artillery crop, as well as the capital city defence and border guard corps. According to various sources, 4 to 6 thousand tanks are in the service of the Korean People's Army Ground Force (KPAGF). Among the light tanks, there are PT-76, T-62 or T-63; medium tanks include T-54, T-55 and T-59 models. KPAGF has it disposal some 2100 armed personnel carriers³¹ and 13,600 anticraft artillery pieces³². For comparison purposes, South Korea with 48 million people maintains and army of 687 thousand troops and 3540 tanks³³.

²⁵ A. Scobell, John M. Sanford, op. cit., p. VIII.

²⁶ R. L. Worden, op. cit., p. 256.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 272.

²⁸ B. Courmont, *Paradoksy polityki Kimów*, Warszawa 2011, p. 51.

²⁹ Olg, *Korea pokazała rakiety dalekiego zasięgu na paradzie. Eksperci: to atrapy*, [online]. [available: 09.11.2014]. Available on the Internet: http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114871,13878463,Korea_pokazala_rakiety_dalekiego_zasiegu_na_paradzie_.html.

³⁰ K. Jong Il, *Koreańska Republika Ludowo-Demokratyczna...*, p. 18-20.

³¹ R. L. Worden, op. cit., p. 247-248.

³² Ibidem, p. 249.

³³ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 195.

KPAGF's vital attribute are numerous special operations forces (SOF) believed to consist of the best trained soldiers of highest morale³⁴. Various sources estimate that their strength ranges from 120,000 to even 180,000 personnel³⁵. In this context what is visible, is a clear tendency towards growth: from 1.8 thousand in 1960, 41 thousand ten years later to 100,000 in 1990. SFO troops are also trained in mountain climbing, swimming and martial arts which means that their and rigorous physical fitness training is similar to the training associated with elite units throughout the world³⁶. These formations include: light infantry, airborne, reconnaissance and sniper forces³⁷. They are trained to meet three basic requirements: to breach the defence of South Korea; to create a second front in the enemy rear area, and to conduct battlefield reconnaissance³⁸. Missions to counter opposing forces and to conduct internal security were added over time. One of the most important SFO operations were the events of January 1968, known as the Blue House Raid. The mission for 31 soldiers was to enter the residence of South Korean President Park Chung-hee in Seoul and assassinate him. This should have resulted in destabilization of South Korea and facilitating the occupation of the South by the KPAGF. The operation was a failure, due to the assassin squad being halted by the South Korean and American soldiers³⁹.

In previous years the strength of North Korean army was weakened by insufficient food provision and the soldiers' overtiredness. It is not easy to evaluate their living conditions but they are most probably very harsh. The military rations are not larger than 700 to 850 grams per day, depending on branch and duties. Leave is limited and corporal punishment is not a rarity. A typical day can last from 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM, during which at least 10 hours are devoted to education and training and only three hours are left unscheduled or for rest time or excluding meals. In addition, soldiers perform many duties not related to their basic mission; for example, units grow crops⁴⁰.

Second branch of the North Korean armed forces is its air force, with a total of 110,000 personnel. The air force is equipped with a fleet of 1,600 aircraft that includes about 780 fighters and 80 bombers. The air force operates 20 strategic air bases and another 70 operational bases and reserve and emergency runways nationwide. The majority of aircraft are concentrated around the Demilitarised Zone. At the beginning of 1990s,

³⁴ H.T. Hodge, op. cit., p. 73.

³⁵ B. Harden, *North Korea Massively Increases It's Special Forces*, [online]. [available: 05.11.2014]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/08/AR2009100804018.html?sid=ST2009100804417>.

³⁶ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁷ R. L. Worden, op. cit., p. 249.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 251.

³⁹ A. Salmon, *January 1968: Assassins Storm Seoul; US Spyship Seized*, [online]. [available: 13. 04. 2014]. Available on the Internet: http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/02/120_59604.html.

⁴⁰ R. L. Worden, op. cit., p. 263.

additional four air bases were activated in the region⁴¹. The most useful aircrafts in KPAGF include MiG-23 and MiG-29 fighters. However, a lot of North Korean aircrafts have lesser capabilities, and these include MiG-17s or MiG-27s. The air force includes several hundred helicopters, mostly Mi-2 and MD-500⁴².

About 60,000 troops serve in the navy⁴³. This is the smallest of the three branches of the military and it comprises mostly outdated, albeit numerous, vessels equipped with rockets and torpedoes. North Korea operates one of the largest submarine fleets in the world. Their number is estimated to be about 70⁴⁴. Miniature submarines responsible for sinking of the South Korean corvette PCC-772 „Cheonan” can be listed here. 46 seamen died as a consequence in March 2010 on the Yellow Sea. This caused a significant diplomatic quarrel between the two Koreas⁴⁵. American-South Korean military manoeuvres conducted as retaliation to the incident were met with protest on the part of China. This only shows the complicated and delicate nature of situation in the Korean Peninsula⁴⁶.

Short-, medium- and long-range ballistic missiles are a vital part of the KPAGF armament. In 1965, the Hamhung Military Academy was founded which was charged with conducting research and development of missiles. This was also done with Soviet assistance. Technological exchange in this area was also conducted with Egypt, Iran, Libya, and Syria⁴⁷. The ballistic missiles include Scud-B (range up to 300 km), Scud-C (550-600km), Nodong-1 (1,300 km), Taepodong-1 (2,000-2,2000 km), Taepodong-2 (5,000-6,000 km), among other. The last type is capable of reaching Alaska and the Guam island. The upgraded version of Taepodong-2 ballistic missile is said to be capable of reaching a target within 10,000 km range, therefore the whole Europe, Africa and West Coast of United States is within its operational range⁴⁸. Just beyond the Dematerialized Zone, a massive number of long-range artillery is amassed, capable of rapid attack on the South Korean targets, including Seoul⁴⁹. Posing as a possible threat thus becomes a vital element in the context of exerting blackmail on the South Korean neighbour.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 252-253.

⁴² Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving The Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, Washington 2012, p. 13.

⁴³ B. Courmont, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴⁴ Office of the Secretary of Defense, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴⁵ Ł. Smalec, *Koreańska beczka prochu*, [online]. [available: 13.04.2014]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.stosunki.pl/?q=content/korea%C5%84ska-beczka-prochu>.

⁴⁶ PAP, *Chiny ostrzegają USA i Koreę Płd. przed manewrami*, [online]. [available: 13.04.2015]. Available on the Internet: <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/311045,chiny-ostregaja-usa-i-koree-pld-przed-manewrami.html>.

⁴⁷ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴⁸ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴⁹ E. Haliżak, *Regionalny kompleks bezpieczeństwa Azji Południowo-Wschodniej*, [in:] „Żurawia Papers”, No. 3, Warszawa 2004, p. 45.

However, what is most controversial as far as the North Korean military threat is concerned, is its nuclear weapon program. Its beginnings date back to 1950s. Kim Il-sung was fascinated by the power of the weapon used by Americans in Hiroshima and Nagasaki⁵⁰. Soon after the end of the Korean War, the Soviet Union and China transferred to the North Korea the technology they had acquired from Japanese and Kuomintang chemical weapons programs⁵¹. In 1956 North Korea signed two agreements with Moscow that provided for Soviet assistance in North Korea's nuclear program. Similar documents were signed with China 3 years later. In 1959, the DPRK and USSR signed a treaty establishing a nuclear research centre for Pyongyang. In 1964 a nuclear research centre was founded at Yongbyon. The first reactor began operation in mid-1960s⁵². The subsequent years saw improvement of the reactors based on the soviet designs. For Pyongyang, the Korean nuclear weapons are motivated by a few factors. Firstly, there is the defensive aspect of nuclear weapons – they serve as deterrent for potential enemies. They are also powerful rhetorical tools of exacting concessions on other participants of the international dialogue. The threat of an attack makes for a vital diplomatic and a negotiatory “bargaining chip”⁵³. This is used to gain international aid, which would allow the regime to survive. Such politics proved efficient e.g. in 1994, when former U.S. President Jimmy Carter visited Pyongyang. Carter negotiated that North Korea would freeze its nuclear program, provided the United States agreed to providing DPRK with energy aid⁵⁴. It is worth noting that these sort of actions in recent years had a rather adverse effect. The sanctions imposed by the international community in response to consecutive nuclear tests only worsen the already difficult economic situation in DPRK. Nuclear weapons allow, however, for the domestic support to be strengthened. The propaganda of nuclear program as a success testifying to the strength of the state as presented to the North Korean people is to make the legitimisation of the authorities all the more powerful⁵⁵.

The DPRK nuclear program was discovered in 1979, when the construction of another nuclear reactor was started⁵⁶. North Korea has mines, where uranium is mined. The country also has the necessary specialists and infrastructure necessary to conduct proper research⁵⁷. On February 10th, 2005, North Korea announced that it was one of the world's nuclear-armed states. Experts have surmised that North Korea could have

⁵⁰ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 196.

⁵¹ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, op. cit., p. 103.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 71-72.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 78.

⁵⁴ B. Demick, *Świata nie mamy czego zazdrościć. Zwyczajne losy mieszkańców Korei Północnej*, Wołowiec 2011, p. 112.

⁵⁵ R. Jakimowicz, op. cit., p. 196.

⁵⁶ *Korea Północna, Konflikt Koreański*, [in:] *Konflikty współczesnego świata*, Warszawa 2008, p. 153.

⁵⁷ E. Halizak, *Regionalny kompleks...*, p. 46.

as many as 8 to 10 atom bombs⁵⁸. Korea is also capable of producing smaller nuclear charges for the short- and long-range missiles⁵⁹.

Analysing the military capabilities of DPRK, it should be noted that it has the third largest arsenal of chemical and biological weapons. Since the 1980s, 5,000 tons of chemical warfare agents attacking the human nervous system have been produced in 8 factories. According to the CIA intelligence, DPRK is probably has the ability to produce Sarin and mustard gas – nerve agents⁶⁰. American military analyst Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. posits that North Korea has 12 chemical agent factories and two chemical weapons factories, at Sakchu and Kanggye. They are responsible for filling and shipping chemical munitions to operational units⁶¹.

Chemical weapons used in a potential conflict could not only cause significant losses amongst the enemy troops but would be expected to demoralize them as well⁶². The North Korea biological weapons include anthrax, smallpox and cholera bacteria⁶³. North Korea started its biological weapon program at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s. The biological warfare program is far less developed than its nuclear, chemical, or ballistic missile counterparts⁶⁴.

4. PERSPECTIVES

The strength of North Korean army is mostly the result of the magnitude of financing that it receives. As was mentioned before, the sum of official and unofficial defence spendings equals approximately 30% GDP. The GDP on its own, however, may be misleading because of the weakness of the North Korean economy. Although in South Korea this indicator is only over 3%, it corresponds to 12 billion dollars annually. The DPRK spendings equal only 4.5 billion dollars⁶⁵. Just to compare, in case of United States the defence spendings a few years ago equalled 607 billion dollars. Hence the question which is asked frequently: why does USA, a country with such immense advantage not deal with the North Korean problem using force? A number of factors have to be taken into account. Such operation, in spite of the technological advantage, would involve loss of life and significant costs, in particular when the North Korean chemical, biological and nuclear weapons are considered. North Korea also means a mountainous terrain in which military operations are difficult to conduct. The support of Russia for the Pyongyang regime, if such conflict should come to be, cannot be excluded⁶⁶. In particular, this could happen following the Eastern Ukraine events, where

⁵⁸ R. L. Worden, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

⁵⁹ R. Jakimowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

⁶⁰ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁶¹ Robert L. Worden, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

⁶² A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁶³ R. Jakimowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁶⁴ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁶⁵ W. J. Dziak, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

⁶⁶ R. Jakimowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

Moscow in the eyes of general public, although officially not a part to the conflict, supports the separatists. Bar the strictly military affairs, attention should be paid to the political issues. For many years now, the general public came to expect active involvement of the United States in crisis situations. However, what needs to be considered is what would be the legal grounds for waging a war in sovereign country. Additionally, one of the foremost goals of the presidency of Barack Obama was to finish the mission in Iraq and withdraw the forces from Afghanistan. In particular during the period after the financial crisis, the Americans were very reluctant to additional spendings for military missions abroad. In the light of all of these facts, it would be difficult to expect the President of USA to initiate new operations. The main partner of USA in the region, namely South Korea, is also rather interested in maintaining the *status quo*.

The conflict would mean the patricidal war of the Korean nation. Secondly, should the Kim Jong-un's regime be overthrown and the Korea united, the gigantic disproportion in economic development of the two Koreas should be considered. The necessity of financial help for the present North Korea would be many times greater than following unification of FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and GDR (German Democratic Republic). It should suffice to recall the data showing that in the 1990s the difference in export value of the two Koreas was 2441 to 1⁶⁷. Another issue is the question of the North Koreans, who would find themselves in a completely new situation after tens of years of exposure to propaganda. All of this results in North Korea being tolerated by the international community in its current form, as long as it does not become a strong threat. This is convenient for many countries. Nonetheless, opinions are being raised that although another attack on South Korea seems very unlikely, there are some troubling signals. KPFA is stationed in a manner optimal for a swift attack and the high army spendings only strengthen those signals. The majority of land forces are garrisoned along the main communication garrisoned along major north-south lines of communication. The KPA has positioned massive numbers of artillery pieces, especially its longer-range systems, close to the Demilitarized Zone. The doctrine of surprise states that the attacks should be launched when the tensions on the Korean Peninsula are low or even non-existent. For the North Korea it would be preferable, if United States were engaged elsewhere to render its support for the defence of the South difficult⁶⁸.

What is visible, is that since the establishment of North Korea, the army is of crucial importance for the policy of this country. Naturally, it became the symbol and warrant of safety and independence. In the first years this was illustrated in the demonstration of strength addressed to Japan and United States. As was demonstrated, the importance of the army remains still strong nowadays. Using the scare tactics of its military strength, the North Korea strived to influence the international community. However, this often results in negative ramifications. Strong army still maintains the regime

⁶⁷ M. Burdelski, *Czynniki warunkujące proces podziału i zjednoczenia Korei*, Toruń 2004, p. 109.

⁶⁸ H.T. Hodge, op. cit., p. 73-76.

which violates the human rights and freedoms of its people⁶⁹. What needs to be stressed here, is the fact that due to long-term “exposure” to the propaganda, a large number of Koreans is truly devoted to the national ideals. When authorities reveal the power of the army, such show legitimizes their power in the eyes of the citizens as well, since they are proud of the power that their leaders had built. Army as an organization it is sometimes described as “state within a state” and may become a dominant political power, replacing the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) as the dominant political force in the DPRK⁷⁰. This scenario was most probable, after the young Kim Jong-un came into power. In particular in traditionalist Korean culture an inexperienced leader may have difficulties in gaining the support and legitimization of his power from the generals. Kim Jong-un, however, seems to be aware of this and he successfully dispose of important political personae, which could be a threat to its reign. One reflection of this is execution of his uncle, Jang Sung-taek considered person number two in North Korea. It can only be surmised that the prognoses saying that Kim Jong-un, interested in the Western world, could relax the policy within the country and improve the relations of DPRK with other countries. On the contrary, the weakness of his power may force even more brutal actions against his competitors, most of which are somehow connected with the army

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⁶⁹ K. Weber, *Korea Północna. Prawa człowieka w państwie Kimów*, Toruń 2013, p. 195-217.

⁷⁰ A. Scobell, J. M. Sanford, op. cit., p. 6.

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