

From Balancing to Bandwagoning:  
Evaluating the Impact of the Sanction Regime on North Korea-Africa Relationships

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**Structured Abstract:**

*Purpose* –The DPRK has maintained an extensive array of foreign relationships over the past decades, both for political and economic gains. This article evaluates the

impact of the current sanction regime on the DPRK's activities with African countries.

*Design/Methodology/Approach/* - The analysis is conducted by using a bespoke behavior framework based Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat' theory. This framework develops the concepts of balancing, defensive bandwagoning and opportunistic bandwagoning as potential behaviors for African states following the imposition of United Nations Security Council Resolutions to sanction the North Korean state from 2006 until 2017.

*Findings* – Evidence suggest that long-standing relationships based on military and economic cooperation have mostly been severed in recent years, thus supporting a general balancing behavior. Findings also suggest that a specific group of countries subscribe to new opportunistic and defensive bandwagoning by embarking on talks and partnerships in the fields of health and science, regardless of the sanction regime, and thus in known defiance of a Western-led world order.

*Practical Implications* – The current rapprochement between North and South Korea on one hand and North Korea and the United States on the other hand, has large implications for the potential removal of UNSCRs that paralyze North Korean foreign relations and slow down its potential development. A clearer understanding of the DPRK's economic and market networks abroad, as well as potential political allies can help differentiate between legitimate activities and illegal ones, thus allowing for a more informed approach to engaging with the DPRK.

*Originality/Value* – The article looks at DPRK relationships that have often been ignored because they were not seen as important given that North Korea was never expected to be successful in developing advanced military and nuclear technology. It is original as it looks at declassified official documents, official economic and

military trade records and news archives, and presents an encompassing analysis of 51 African countries' relations with the DPRK over time. The results of the study are valuable as they add to the understanding of the DPRK's foreign policy behavior, which is important given its potential nuclear status.

**Keywords:** DPRK, North Korea, sanctions, third world, Africa, UNSRC

## **Introduction**

In 2017, Pyongyang was undoubtedly an important focus in the international arena: with no less than 11 missile launches and a 6<sup>th</sup> nuclear test, a range of new United Nations Security Council Resolutions further restricted the DPRK's economic and military relations. Sanctions that focused on limiting light weapons spread and financial transactions to and from Pyongyang were also complemented by the United States' own unilateral sanctions and travel ban. For the first time, sanctions also focused on otherwise neglected aspects of the DPRK's trading networks and revenue schemes, including a large number of legal ventures. As a result, Pyongyang's overseas workers were heavily targeted, and so were North Korean firms operating abroad, including Mansudae Art Studio and Mansudae Overseas Projects which had built statues and monuments throughout Africa and parts of Asia since the 1980s.

Thus, after more than fifty years of military and economic cooperation with North Korea, Uganda announced it would sever its relationship with the DPRK in October

2017.<sup>1</sup> The cooperation had expanded to many sectors, but its flagship pattern involved Pyongyang supplying military advisors and weapons in exchange for Kampala's economic support and agricultural products. Personal relationships also ran deep, with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, always placing a good word in for the Korean 'friends who has helped Uganda over time.'<sup>2</sup>

Uganda's attitude toward the sanctions, and its decision to ultimately sever its ties with the DPRK highlights the dilemma that a number of countries also involved with Pyongyang have to contend with. Since its creation in 1948, the DPRK has been engaged with a large amount of countries around the world and especially in Africa, and has conducted an extended foreign policy enterprise during the Cold War to secure relationships around the world to counterbalance the Republic of Korea's own efforts at being seen as the 'legitimate' Korea. Some of these countries have become export grounds for North Korean military equipment, some have become fertile partners in agricultural exchanges, and some have become smuggling opportunities for gold and rhino horns.

Exploring the extent of African engagement with the DPRK is as equally original as it is crucial as it remains a relatively little-analyzed avenue in North Korean studies than traditional partnerships and relationships the DPRK might have developed with Russia or China for example. Yet, crucial questions abound. Do we see an abandonment and isolation of the DPRK? Are countries paying lip-service to the

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<sup>1</sup> Daily Monitor, "Painful Divorce as Uganda Ends 50-Year Military Cooperation with North Korea," December 4, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Associated Press International, "Uganda Expels North Korea Military Experts over UN Sanctions," October 20, 2017.

sanction regime? For what reasons? More importantly, is there a shift in DPRK relationships from countries it used to engage with and whose well-documented engagement history has led to more scrutiny from the international community to countries that have not been seen as traditionally engaged with the DPRK, but are joining the bandwagon because of perceived interests, be they economic or political? In order to investigate the potentially significant changing relationship between the 51 countries that form the African continent and the DPRK, the article proceeds in four steps. First, it lays out the DPRK and its Africa pursuit in its historical context. Second, it analyses the DPRK's engagement via the prism of benevolent and economic diplomacy. Third, it presents a concise theoretical discussion of the DPRK sanction regime and rigorous hypotheses regarding the potential decisions to bandwagon with the international community in its efforts to balance against Pyongyang, or bandwagon with the DPRK to balance against external pressures in an effort to salvage needed political, trade and security links. Fourth, it evaluates which countries and sectors have mostly been affected by United Nations Security Council Resolution by considering balancing, defensive bandwagoning and opportunistic bandwagoning as the three main patterns developing in the Kim Jong Un era.

## **I. Developing DPRK-Africa relations**

### *a. Relating with the Third World*

The DPRK was, upon its establishment as an independent republic on September 9, 1948, already in contention for its very survival and legitimacy. The presence of the Republic of Korea and the support it received from the United States

led to a situation whereby both Koreas had to attempt to establish themselves as the sole Korea to the rest of the world. The situation was amplified by the Korean War and the absence of a peace settlement, by geopolitical forces during the Cold War that pitted both Koreans on either sides of a diplomatic fence, and because of policies that the Koreas themselves had developed. In particular, both Koreas insisted for the better part of three decades that a country would not be able to have relationship with both Koreas and therefore had to choose to engage with either one, or with the other. What this meant was that both Koreas competed fiercely with one another to secure relationships in parts of Asia and Africa, in order to project image and influence (Armstrong 2013). This policy was finding good resonance around the developing world and as a young, newly-independent country freed of Japanese colonialism, the DPRK was unencumbered by its past. Indeed, there was no talk of the Kim regime being a dictatorship and no worry about militarization yet. What was particularly important to a number of newly-decolonized countries was the DPRK's commitment to independence: thus, the DPRK shared many similarities with other countries that sought recognition as independent states (Young 2015).

Apart from its decolonized identity, the DPRK had a number of interesting assets it could flaunt to attract other newly-independent countries into its orbit. For one, it had solid economic performances thanks to the Japanese modernization and investments in infrastructure that had taken place in the northern part of the peninsula during the colonization. This meant that Pyongyang's economy was growing faster than that of Seoul, as least in the early partition days (Ji 2001). It was also clear that the DPRK was receiving economic aid from the Soviet Union, and that indirectly, the Soviet Union was subsidizing any assistance that the DPRK would provide to third countries

(Bechtol 2012). But Kim Il Sung was concerned about Soviet influence within its domestic system and wanted to retain its political independence (Kim 1970). This provided the impetus for the evolution in 1974 of Chuch'e from a political tool designed to strengthen Kim Il Sung's domestic standing by nurturing his personality cult to Kimilsungism, an ideology that would focus on states' rights to national identity and sovereignty. But long before Kimilsungism and its focus on the domestic, attempts at a pseudo internationalization strategy had been made, with Pyongyang starting as early as the mid-1950s to support a number of independence and freedom movements. Indeed, Gamal Abdel Nasser received help from the DPRK during the 1956 Suez Crisis,<sup>3</sup> and Korean political support was also extended to the Algerian National Liberation Front<sup>4</sup> while construction materials and Korean engineers participated in the rebuilding of Addis Ababa.<sup>5</sup> This internationalization strategy was not based on a desire to fundamentally help others, though: then, and now, North Korean foreign policy has always been rooted in independence, self-gain and nationalism (Szalontai 2005, Armstrong 2013). It managed to crystalize as such because of the need to compete with South Korea for diplomatic recognition as well as legitimation, thus leading the DPRK to develop relationships with 164 countries,

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<sup>3</sup> "Report attached to 'Development of Relations with Socialist Countries since March 19, 1961,'" 19 March 1961, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Dossier 08/13/07; Fond: GPRA, 1958-62; Archives Nationales d'Algérie, Alger. Translated from French and transcribed by Pierre Asselin, with Paulina Kostrzewski. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121589> [Last Accessed 31 May 2018].

<sup>4</sup> "Report attached to 'Development of Relations with Socialist Countries since March 19, 1961,'" 19 March 1961, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Dossier 08/13/07; Fond: GPRA, 1958-62; Archives Nationales d'Algérie, Alger. Translated from French and transcribed by Pierre Asselin, with Paulina Kostrzewski. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121589> [Last Accessed 31 May 2018].

<sup>5</sup> "Hungarian Embassy in Ethiopia, Telegram, 25 November 1980. Subject: DPRK-Ethiopian relations.," 25 November 1980, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1980, 84. doboz, 81-10, 00884/1980. Translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115823> [Last Accessed 31 May 2018].

and to maintain more than 65 embassies abroad (Wertz, Oh, and Kim 2016). African countries were particularly well-suited to the DPRK's internationalization strategy (Owoeye 1991) as they were located far-enough not to interfere too quickly into inter-Korean matters. They also possessed agricultural goods and resources that Pyongyang did not always have. The fact that they often needed industrial products and military goods and services was a good match, since this is what the DPRK specialized in and possessed at the time.

*b. Crafting an Africa foreign policy*

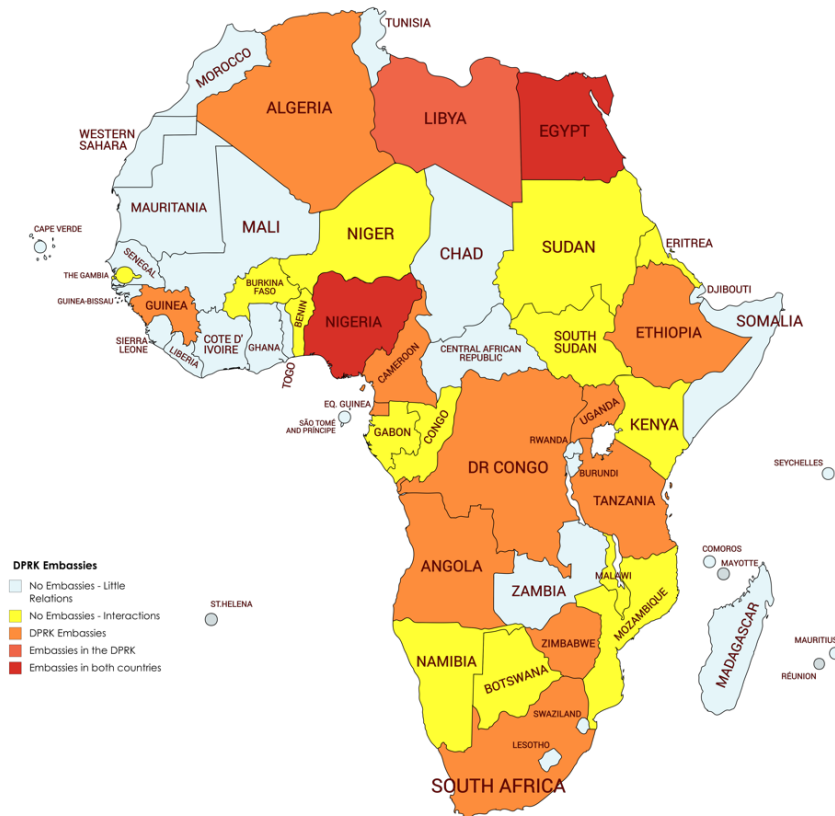
The DPRK established its first diplomatic relationship with an African country, Guinea, in 1958. Dozens of relationships followed quickly,<sup>6</sup> partly because of the DPRK's drive to outpace the ROK at the international relationship game, and partly because the DPRK was in need of partners for economic commerce (see Table 1). The bulk of partnerships was established in the 1950s and in the 1960s, when the DPRK still had a comparative advantage over the ROK when it came to its industrial capacity and outputs. Because maintaining full diplomatic missions abroad was onerous for a small economy like North Korea, a number of ambassadors and diplomatic missions covered several countries at once.

Figure 1. DPRK-Africa Diplomatic Relationships

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<sup>6</sup> "Report, Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic in the DPRK to the Foreign Ministry of Hungary," 20 May 1960, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j-Korea-5/b-004817/1960 4.d. Translated by József Litkei.





Out of 51 African countries, Egypt and Nigeria were the only two countries that hosted a DPRK embassy and also had their own embassy in the DPRK. The DPRK operated its designated embassies in 11 additional countries in Africa. Those 13 countries have been at the core of the DPRK’s economic strategy with the African continent.

**Table 1. DPRK Diplomatic Relationship with African Countries**

<b>Absence of Embassy and Little to No Interactions</b>			
Mali	1961-08-29	Mauritius	1973-03-16
Mauritania	1964-11-12	Liberia	1973-12-20
Ghana	1964-12-28	Cote D’Ivoire	1974-01-09
Burundi	1967-03-12	Guinea-Bissau	1974-03-16
Somalia	1967-04-13	Tunisia	1975-08-03
Zambia	1969-04-12	Sao Tome and Principles	1975-08-09
Chad	1969-05-08	Cape Verde	1975-08-18
Cent. Af. Rep.	1969-09-05	Comoros	1975-11-13
Sierra Leone	1971-10-14	Seychelles	1976-06-28

Rwanda	1972-04-22	Lesotho	1980-07-19
Senegal	1972-09-08	Morocco	1989-02-13
Madagascar	1972-11-16	Djibouti	1993-06-13
Togo	1973-01-31	Swaziland	2007-09-20

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**Absence of Embassy but Interactions**

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Congo (R)	1964-12-24	Botswana	1974-12-27
Sudan	1969-06-21	Kenya	1975-05-12
Burkina Faso	1972-11-10	Mozambique	1975-06-25
Benin	1973-02-05	Malawi	1982-06-25
Gambia	1973-03-02	Namibia	1990-03-22
Niger	1973-03-02	Eritrea	1993-05-25
Gabon	1974-01-29		

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**Presence of DPRK Embassies**

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Algeria	1958-09-25	Ethiopia	1975-06-05
Guinea	1958-10-08	Angola	1975-11-16
Tanzania	1965-01-13	Congo (DR)	1975-12-15
Equatorial Guinea	1969-01-30	Zimbabwe	1980-04-18
Cameroon	1972-03-03	South Africa	1988-08-10
Uganda	1972-08-02		

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**Presence of Embassies in the DPRK**

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Libya	1974-01-23	(Closed as of 2013?)	
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**Presence of Embassies in Both Countries**

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Egypt	1963-08-24	Nigeria	1976-05-25
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*Source: Diplomatic relations original dates as listed by The National Committee on North Korea – Issue Brief – DPRK Diplomatic Relations, August 2015.*

The literature directly addressing the DPRK’s engagement with African countries is sparse, and has focused on the one hand on the rationale for the DPRK’s efforts to engage with African countries, and on the other hand on specific bilateral relationships. Jide Owoeye’s work published by *Asian Survey* in 1991 was the first bespoke piece of research solely focusing on the DPRK’s policy toward Africa, and

suggested that this engagement was directly proportional to the amount of clout Pyongyang could garner and use against Seoul (1991). More recently, Benjamin Young has provided a historical look at how the DPRK attempted to develop a narrative that would present Pyongyang as a model for recent decolonized states, and how it had attempted to ‘sell’ it to African nations from the 1960s onward (2015). Deon Geldenhuys provided a more specific look at the DPRK-South Africa relationship, detailing Pyongyang’s political support of the ANC fight against Apartheid (2005). Lyong Choi, and Il-Young Jeong focused particularly on the DPRK-Zimbabwe relationship which was centered on Pyongyang’s support to Robert Mugabe (2017). There is also a consensus amongst researchers that the original goal for engaging Africa was about the DPRK projecting itself in defiance of the ROK and support it was receiving from the United States, in order to offer a non-Western alternative driven by a unique ideology, Chuch’e and later Kimilsungism, to countries that were weary of Western influence and its economic model. This ideology was based on the principles offered by Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism that propelled the DPRK to band with those who were opposing imperialism and that would also offer support to them (Geldenhuys 2005). But there were limits to what Kimilsungism could offer, and this was well-understood by most African countries as well. For the DPRK, cooperation with the Third World and especially with Africa did not mean that countries had to adhere to its own political ideology, but just that they would regard the DPRK as the sole legitimate Korean government (Young 2015). This was in large part what Pyongyang was after: gaining recognition and legitimacy on the international scene in order to influence countries that benefitted from a vote at the United Nations, that could be sympathetic to the DPRK cause, and would signal the withdrawal of United States troops from the Korean peninsula. Given the number

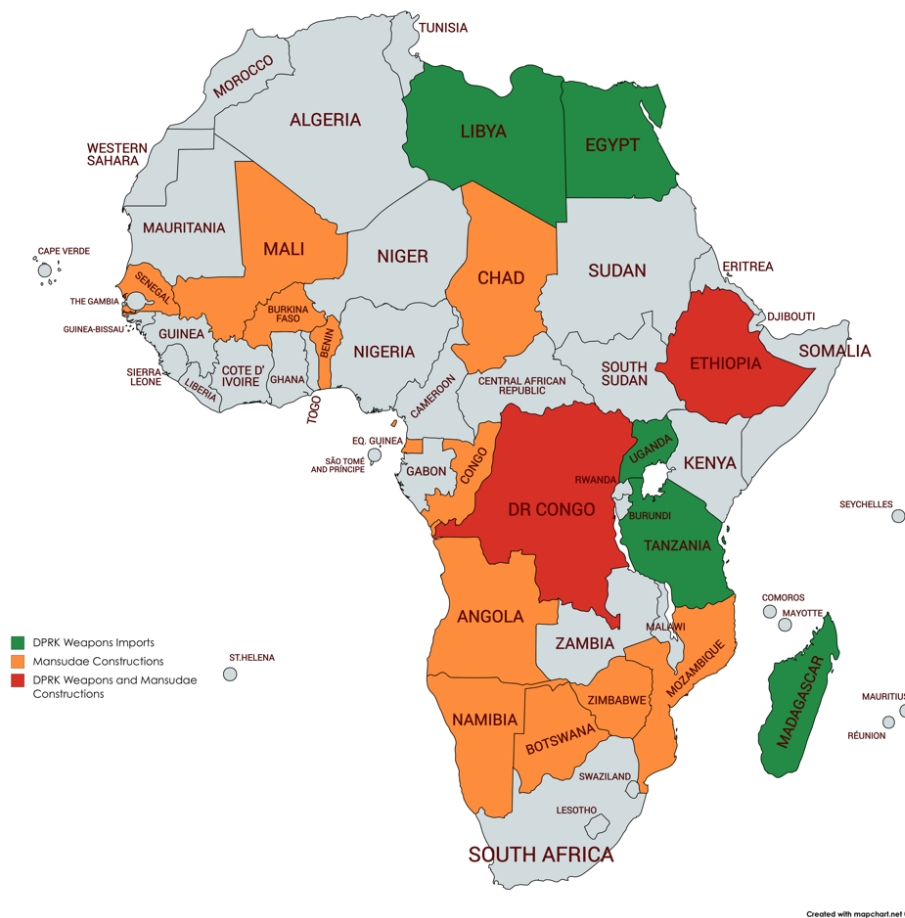
of countries in Africa that were decolonized in the 1950s and the 1960s, UN membership increased dramatically, thus providing an opportunity for the DPRK to capture, by association, some of their voting power (Owoeye 1991). So, the DPRK sent military advisors, personnel and goods to various African countries, and the North Koreans were often seen, and not without good foundations, as opportunists in Africa, interested in economic and personal gains (Young 2015). In a number of cases, the DPRK was able to forge relationships that went beyond simple commerce: this was the case in Socialists or Marxists-focused countries such as Tanzania and Ghana where party-to-party links were established (Owoeye 1991). For African countries too, there was little mileage in following an ideology if concrete economic gains were not available. Hence, they prioritized an ‘eco-political orientation’ which could be a good fit for the DPRK’s need for relationships of convenience as well (Scalapino 1983).

## **II. DPRK Engagement in Africa**

The breadth of Korean activities in Africa is wide: initially, goodwill missions were sent to Africa develop relationships. Then, Egypt and Mauritania were sending cotton to Pyongyang while the DPRK was providing steel and fertilizers. It also helped Mali develop a ceramic facility, it helped with the production of white cement in Sudan, and supported Benin’s rice cultivation efforts (Owoeye 1991). Military support and training came later, in the mid 1970s when the DPRK itself has started to reproduce some of the equipment it had received during and after the Korean war

from China and the Soviet Union, and slowly transformed from an arm-importer to an arm-exporter. Thus, two clear pathways emerged: the DPRK projecting an image of benevolent diplomacy through soft power, and the DPRK pursuing economic diplomacy through contract work.

Figure 2. DPRK-Africa Trade Patterns



*a. 'Benevolent' Diplomacy*

The early attempts to engage with African countries in the 1950s and 1960s were tied to Pyongyang's pursuit of influence through the enlargement process happening at the United Nations. The modus operandi for Pyongyang was clear:

missions were dispatched to countries that had showed support for Seoul, and which tended initially to be former French colonies. The process then involved signing treaties of amity, friendship or cooperation, before formal diplomatic relationships were established, and actual partnership activities were developed. The DPRK also provided economic aid to a number of countries, but this has to be understood within the context of Pyongyang as a Third World country itself supporting other Third World states. Hence, scope and scale were limited, and focused on relatively low-cost projects on technical fields the DPRK had relative experience and success in, such as steel, cement, and irrigation projects (Owoeye 1991). On November 17, 1975, the United Nations adopted Western draft resolution 3390A that called for dialogue between North and South Korea, the continuation of the Armistice and an alternative arrangement to the pure dissolution of the United Nations Command on the Korean peninsula. It also adopted Communist draft resolution 3390B that called for the dissolution of the United Nations Command, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the peninsula as well as the replacing of the Armistice by a permanent peace treaty. This was a resounding success for the DPRK and was largely achieved because of its courtship of the Third World and especially of the African vote. While it is not possible to find clear evidence that support the claim that the DPRK drastically changed its Africa policy following this date, it is obvious that by the mid 1970s, North Korean endeavors in Africa had changed. For one, the DPRK's economy was slowly being outpaced by that of the South, and there was little support for the adoption of Chuch'e around the world. The relationship the DPRK had developed with the PRC and the USSR was also changing because of a slow turn toward capitalism and global finance. Hence, studentships were offered for African youth to

come study in the DPRK, in exchange for diplomatic relations and trade deals (Young 2015).

*b. Economic Diplomacy*

Profit-focused relationships have concentrated on a DPRK presence aboard through contract workers, and a trading relationship that has principally involved military equipment. The military relationship crystalized at a time when political turmoil was rocking a number of African countries dealing with the establishment of political structures in a post-colonial world. North Korea supplied a range of technology (see Table 2). Amongst goods supplied, we find light equipment suitable for guerrilla-type activities (rocket launchers), second-hand Mig-17 jet fighters to Madagascar and a type originally acquired during the 1950s from China (second-hand) and the USSR, Strela missiles originally acquired from Russia in 1976 and sold to Uganda, and Korean-made Hwasong 6 modelled after Scud C, and sold to Libya (Grzelczyk 2018).

**Table 2. DPRK as Weapons Supplier**

	Order	Delivery	Order	Delivered	Weapon Type and Description
<b>Recipients</b>					
Congo (DR)	1973*	1974	3	3	Fast Attack Craft Project-123/P-4 [Second-hand]
	1975*	1975	10*	10*	Towed Gun M-46 130mm
Egypt	1983*	1984 1987	145*	145*	Self-Propelled Multiple Rocket Launcher BM-21 Grad 122mm

Ethiopia	2000*	2000	10*	10*	Armored Personnel Carrier YW-531/Type-63
Libya	1979*	1980	10*	10*	Self-Propelled Multiple Rocket Launcher BM-21 Grad 122mm
	1995	1999	5*	5*	Surface-to-Surface Missile Hwasong-6/Scud Mod-C
Madagascar	1975*	1975	4	4	Fighter Aircraft Mig-17 [Second-hand]
	1978*	1979	4	4*	Landing Craft Nampo
Tanzania	1979*	1980	4	4*	Landing Craft Nampo
Uganda	1987*	1987	10	10	Self-Propelled Multiple Rocket Launcher BM-21 Grad 122mm
	1987*	1987	14*	14*	Armored Personnel Carrier BTR-152 [Second-hand]
	1987*	1987	100*	100*	Portable Surface-to-Air Missile Strela-2/SA-7
* Estimated					

*Source: Adapted from SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.*

DPRK contract workers can be divided into two categories: military/security advisers, and construction workers. The DPRK is said to have trained more than 2,500 guerilla fighters in the Third World in the 1970s decade along (Young 2015). The Uganda-DPRK is the most visible relationship, and one that covers many fronts. North Korea's expertise and superior industrial capacities made Pyongyang the more dominant partner in many relationships, as economic cooperation also led to more development-oriented work. As such, North Korea invested into Uganda to rehabilitate copper mines that had been closed since the last 1970s,<sup>7</sup> and assisted with a number of Uganda's small hydropower stations.<sup>8</sup> Pyongyang was also seen as more of a protector and a benefactor as it rescheduled Uganda's debts in 1989 after

<sup>7</sup> Xinhua General Overseas Service, "Uganda to reactivate copper industry with DPRK help," February 10, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Africa News, "Uganda; North Korea to assist Energy sector," June 21 2004.



President Museveni appealed to its socialist partners around the world. Along with a delayed repayment of two years North Korea supplied tractors to support the Ugandan agricultural sector.<sup>9</sup> North Korea has also trained the Ugandan police force in martial arts since 1987, with the agreement renegotiated and extended in 2011.<sup>10</sup> North Korean builders have built police force accommodations in Uganda,<sup>11</sup> but most of North Korean foreign constructions have involved its artistic studio Mansudae. Mansudae is an umbrella company that was founded in 1959 and that hosts painters, sculptors, craftsmen and technicians. Mansudae has specialized in commemorative monuments and statues, from the early 1980s until nowadays (See Table 3). As many African countries were decolonized in the 1950s and 1960s (33 of Sub-Sahara's Africa's 49 states gained independence between 1958 and 1968), they contracted with Mansudae to receive speedily-build, relatively cheap monuments and statues. As seen earlier, Mansudae's overseas future is now constrained by UN sanctions that prohibit both North Korean workers abroad, and North Korea exporting monuments and statues.

**Table 3. DPRK Mansudae Overseas Constructions in Africa**

Country	Monument Name	Completion Year	Cost (Million US\$)*
Angola	Statue of Agostinho Neto	2012	Unknown
	Peace Monument	2009	1.5
	Antonio Agostinho Neto Cultural Centre	2009	40
	Cabinda Park	2008	13

<sup>9</sup> Xinhua General Overseas News Service, "DPRK reschedules Uganda's debts," January 15, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> The East African, "Uganda, Tanzania in trouble with UN over 'arms deals' with North Korea," April 12, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Africa News, "Uganda; North Korea to Solve Police Housing Crisis," 12 June 2013.

Benin	Statue of King Béhanzin	2006	Unknown
Botswana	Monument to the Three Dikgosi	2005	1.7
Burkina Faso	Revolution Torch Square	1984	Unknown
Chad	Independence Square	2010	Unknown
Congo (DR)	Statue of Joseph Kasavubu	2010	Unknown
	Lumumba Monument	2002	10
	Basketball Stadium	Unknown	14.4
	Athlete Academic Centre	Unknown	4.8
Congo (R)	Statue of Laurent-Désiré Kabila	2002	Unknown
	Presidential Villa	Unknown	0.8
Equatorial Guinea	Government Office Building	2010	1.5
	Luba Football Stadium	2010	6.74
	Luba Governmental Conference Hall	2010	3.5
Ethiopia	Tiglachin Memorial	1984	Unknown
	Statue of General Abdoulaye Soumaré	2012	Unknown
Mali	Anonymous Soldier Monument, Army Square	2012	0.41
	Presidential Palace External Decoration	2010	0.7
Mozambique	Samora Machel Statue	2011	Unknown
	Presidential Palace	2008	49
Namibia	National Heroes' Acre	2002	5.23
	Military Museum	2004	1.8
	Independence Memorial Museum	2014	10
Senegal	Monument de la Renaissance Africaine	2010	30
Zimbabwe	National Heroes' Acre	1981	60
	Joshua Nkomo Statue	2010	Unknown
	Two statues of President Mugabe	2014	5
	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front Building	Unknown	Unknown
* Because it is not possible to receive DPRK confirmation on these numbers, they should be considered as indicative only.			
<b>Estimated Overall Value</b>			260.12

### III. Life as a Sanctioned State

#### *a. Definitions*

Economic sanctions, put simply, are the ‘deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations’ (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 1990, 2). If the conditions needed for sanctions to be successful tend to be for a state to be democratic, have good trade volume with the

sender, and some political instability that will be more likely to sway loyalty, it is easy to understand why sanction success rate is overall quite low. Indeed, Hufbauer et al. have placed a partial success rate at 34% out of 174 cases studied between 1915 and 2000 (2009). American unilateral sanctions do not fare very well in this picture, with less than a quarter of economic blockades in the last four decades yielding satisfactory results (Rhyu and Bae 2010). We also know that institutional design is faulty in some cases, and especially when it comes to multilateralism: the United Nations Security Council Resolutions are binding according to United Nations Charter Article 25, yet the Security Council does not have the tools to legally make sure member-states follow and enact its decisions (Farrall 2009). What this means, is that many entities (i.e. business, private individuals, organizations) may be unaware of specific sanctions, and continue to engage with a targeted country because the state they legally operate in is either unable to enforce sanctions, or unwilling to do so. The question of will is also at the heart of the sanction dilemma: for sanctions to work, gains have to supersede the costs of abandoning a specific behavior or a specific relationship.

*b. Application in light of the Korean case*

The bulk of the North Korean sanction regime centers on a number of United Nations Security Council Resolutions that are intended to be ‘smart’ sanctions, that is to say sanctions that are designed not to harm the North Korean population that already suffers under harsh economic and human rights conditions. Thus, the sanctions are supposed to target the leadership (Weissmann and Hagström 2016).

Given that Pyongyang was affected by sanctions in three major areas (1) its nuclear development, (2) its military trade, and (3) its conventional trade, it is likely that DPRK-Africa relationships have been mostly affected within the military trade and conventional trade areas since it consists of the bulk of their relations. The most recent rounds of sanctions now target relationships and revenue-schemes that had largely been ignored in the past, but that the DPRK had sought in a bid to replace loss of revenues from its most visible relationships, notably with China (Haggard and Noland 2010).

Overall DPRK military trade has been heavily affected since Security Council Resolution 1718 (October 2006) called for the DPRK to stop the development of its ballistic missile program. A trade ban was put in place to block the sale of battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircrafts, helicopters, warships, missiles, missile systems, and large-scale arms. It was followed a few years later by Security Council Resolution 1874 (June 2009) that expanded the arms ban to all weapon imports and exports, with the exception, still, of small arms. It also became required for any state that intended to sell weapons to the DPRK to inform the United Nations Security Council beforehand. Sanctions further expanded to access possibilities, with Security Council Resolution 2087 (January 2013) allowing states to seize and destroy illicit cargo to and from the DPRK, as well as cargo that could contain materials used to research or develop weapons. Security Council Resolution 2270 (March 2016) fully prohibited small arms sales and light weapons trade. Finally, Security Council Resolution 2321 (November 2016) expanded the list of prohibited chemical, biological, nuclear and missile-usable items available for supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK.

As for the DPRK conventional trade, Security Council Resolution 1718 (October 2006) installed a ban on luxury goods imports to North Korea, while emphasis was put on increased inspection of any DPRK-related cargo. Security Council Resolution 1874 (June 2009) expanded sanctions on goods and prohibited loans to the DPRK, but still allowed humanitarian-purpose projects to be carried out. Yet, a few years later, Security Council Resolution 2087 (January 2013) expanded the ban on people traveling back and forth while Security Council Resolution 2094 (March 2013) restricted bulks cash transfer, and made it generally more difficult for the DPRK to access international banking systems. A number of additional bans on specific luxury goods such as jewelry, yachts, or conventional and racing cars were also enacted. Security Council Resolution 2270 (March 2016) called for the closing of any foreign financial institution, bank branch and joint venture in North Korea within three months and further sanctions were imposed on training and knowledge-exchange activities. Security Council Resolution 2321 (November 2016) compressed the DPRK's economy even further by calling for a ban on the DPRK selling and transferring iron and iron ore and limiting the import of DPRK coal. It also prevented the DPRK from exporting a number of metals such as copper, nickel, silver, zinc, as well as specific manufactured goods such as helicopters, vessels, and statues. Security Council Resolution 2371 (August 2017) installed further limits on coal exports, iron and iron ore exports ore, seafood exports, lead and lead ore exports, as well as a freeze on the DPRK Foreign Trade Bank assets, and a ban on North Korean overseas laborers. Security Council Resolution 2375 (September 2017) imposed a ban on natural gas and North Korean-manufactured textile, imposed oil quota for sale to the

DPRK, imposed new restrictions on new visa for North Korean overseas laborers, called for systematic Korean ships inspections, and called for a ban on joint ventures. Finally, Security Council Resolution 2397 (December 2017) limited refined petroleum imports to the DPRK, and banned DPRK export of food, machinery, electrical equipment, earth, stones, woods, vessels, and industrial equipment. It also banned exports to the DPRK of industrial equipment, machinery, vehicles, and metals. It called for an asset freeze of the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, and called for inspections and impounding of vessels carrying petroleum products. Finally, it called for the return to of all North Korean overseas workers back to the DPRK within 2 years.

### *c. Hypotheses*

For African countries, the sanction regime affecting their relationship with the DPRK is unusual, as United Nations sanctions are usually focused on peace and security, but in this particular case, focus on non-proliferation and on the destruction of trade links (Charron and Portela 2015). Sanctions imposed from 2016 onward are now directly relevant to the DPRK-Africa relationship, and are likely to change existing patterns of interactions that had been, until now, largely considered peripheral to the survival of the DPRK and the development of its missile and nuclear weapons program. To help frame the analysis in a rigorous and robust theoretical framework, the article focuses specifically on hypotheses that are underpinned by the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning behaviors which Stephen Walt identifies as contingent upon how a specific threat is perceived (1987). In Walt's configuration,

states will generally attempt to balance against a specific threat, while weaker ones might bandwagon with the rising threat, depending on their strength, proximity, offensive capabilities and offensive intention. Adapting this model to the DPRK relationship context, states might see the DPRK's actions and how they might eventually be in breach of sanction as threats. In this case, they will follow the UNSCR recommendation and attempt to apply and enact sanctions. They will therefore oftentimes sever the relationship they had with the DPRK (Balancing), if they had not already done so prior to the intensification of the sanction regime. Other states might disregard the existing sanction regime and carry on with their relationship with the DPRK because of specific gains. Those perceived gains can lead to countries to not apply sanctions as a refusal to conform to an established, oftentimes Western-dominated economic environment (Defensive Bandwagoning). Other countries might refuse to conform to sanctions and start to engage with the DPRK because of perceived economic gains and an interest to fill the gap left by those who would have balanced (Opportunistic Bandwagoning).

#### **IV. Evaluating the post-sanction DPRK-Africa map**

The majority of African countries have either past or shallow links with Pyongyang. While they were thus not directly affected by UNSCR sanctions, some were still mindful of their relations. Botswana for example did not have ambassadorial relations but utilized the Mansudae company for its Three Dikgosi

monument in 2005 before vocally severing its ties with Pyongyang<sup>12</sup> over the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in 2014.<sup>13</sup> Kenya started to develop ties with the DPRK in 2009, working mostly on low-level energy projects, but denied in 2015 North Korea's request for an embassy, managing its relation instead via the North Korean embassy present in neighbor Uganda. The rest of the relations can be divided into three categories:

(a) Balancing, where states will change their behaviors and apply UN sanctions.

Cases in this particular category mostly feature ship investigations, the severing of contract works with Mansudae Art Studio, and for a few deep-seated relationships, a drastic abandonment of military and economic trade links;

(b) Defensive bandwagoning, involving countries that not only evade UN sanction application, but also generally take part in convoluted and disguised, illegal economic schemes to mask the relationship;

(c) Opportunistic bandwagoning, where countries that did not necessarily have longstanding arrangements with the DPRK appear to be developing new ones amidst sanctions. This is particularly the case for the setting-up of new service-industry exchanges and goods trading.

### Figure 3. DPRK-Africa Post-Sanction Behaviors

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<sup>12</sup> Botswana Daily News, "Botswana not Investigated for North Korea Sanctions Busting," September 20, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Tangerine, "Botswana Severs Ties with North Korea," February 25, 2014.





*a. Balancing – Switching to Apply Sanctions*

One of the most visible and more accessible types of activity to sanction and monitor is shipping trade: for the DPRK, cargo ships have been used to bring

legitimate goods back and forth but in many cases, illegitimate goods have also been carried around in secret, dissimulated under food loads, for example. As a result, conventional trade is now severely restricted as they no longer just focus on military cargos. Thus, a number of countries have decided to refuse port usage to DPRK vessels. Comoros for example has removed North Korean ships from its registry,<sup>14</sup> while Sierra Leone has been investigating the case of vessels that might have been de-registered from Panama to be flagged to Sierra Leone, thus breaching UNSCR 2321 paragraph 24.<sup>15</sup>

Mansudae's arts and construction workers, another hard-to-hide business venture for the DPRK given the public nature of building erections, have been specifically targeted by the UNSCR 2397. For example, Mansudae customer Senegal had confirmed 29 active staff members in the country since the company's registration in April 23, 2008. On October 13, 2016, however, Senegal stopped issuing entry and short stay visas to DPRK workers.<sup>16</sup> Zimbabwe, which has enjoyed a close relationship with the Kim dynasty via Robert Mugabe has more recently cracked down on joint ventures with the DPRK and decided to apply UNSCR 2375.<sup>17</sup> Given the range of activities that has involved both countries (those include Pyongyang training soldiers since 1980,<sup>18</sup> a healthcare deal signed in 2006<sup>19</sup> and wild animals

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<sup>14</sup> NK News, "Comoros Islands Removes Sanctioned N. Korean Ship from its Registry," October 20, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> NK News, "Sierra Leone Says it is Investigating North Korea-Linked Ships," March 7, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> NK News, "North Korean Company under Investigation by Senegal: Dakar," May 30, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Africa News, "Zimbabwe: Govt Buckles to UN Pressure on North Korea Dealings," October 24, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> NK News, "Zimbabwe and North Korea: Uranium, Elephants and a Massacre," October 30, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> HIS Global Insight, "Pariahs Join Hands, as Zimbabwe and North Korea Sign Healthcare Deal," August 11, 2006.

gifted to Pyongyang in 2010,)<sup>20</sup> it is likely that Zimbabwe's relationship with Mansudae will come into scrutiny, along with the investigation of small-scale businesses potentially linking individuals from the two countries.

Three major DPRK partners have also started to cut ties with the DPRK. The United Nations started probing a North Korean firm called Green Pine Corporation in 2012, since it was located in Luanda.<sup>21</sup> Given that the DPRK and Angola had, pre-sanctions, an extensive relationship involving agricultural investments and military engagements,<sup>22</sup> it is likely that the firm was trading beyond the remit still allowed by the sanction regime. Concrete actions to terminate the Mansudae Angola projects were taken on November 13, 2017, with Angola allegedly deporting a number of North Korean citizens later in the year.<sup>23</sup> Ethiopia, which had cultivated a relationship with the DPRK based on tight economic and political ties and wanted to boost its partnerships in 2017<sup>24</sup> responded to UNSCR 2321 by restricting access to bank accounts that were available in its North Korean embassy and that were likely used to support underground and illegal activities in other parts of Africa as well.<sup>25</sup> Uganda appears to also be turning away, despite the extensive nature of the Uganda-North Korean ties: in the past, Uganda had received DPRK aid for its energy sector,<sup>26</sup> North

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<sup>20</sup> Africa News, "Zimbabwe: Govt Agency to Give North Korea Wild Animals," May 17, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Africa Review, "UN Probes Angola and Mozambique Deals with North Korea," September 12, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, "Angola Ends North Korea Builder Contracts," January 30, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> NK News, "Angola Terminates 'all contracts' with North Korea's Mansudae Company: Report," January 30, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> NK News, "North Korea, Ethiopia to Step up Bilateral Ties: KCNA," June 9, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> NK News, "Ethiopia working to Restrict North Korean Embassy's Bank Accounts: MFA," August 3, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Africa News, "Uganda; North Korea to Assist Energy Sector," June 21, 2002.

Korea had built police housing, and it had trained police and military officers,<sup>27</sup> but it could not escape the UN scrutiny. It appears that Uganda decided, as of late 2017, to expel North Korea military experts<sup>28</sup> and has, according to a report submitted to UN, cut scientific, technical and military ties too. A number of entry permits have also been canceled for 9 doctors and 14 air force instructors. It is unclear if Uganda has expelled all illegal North Korean personnel, but with 2019 being the cutoff to expel, it might take a while to find positive proofs that the relationship has indeed been severed for the time being.<sup>29</sup>

But while it is clear that halting a deep relationship has economic implications which are not insignificant for a number of African countries, decisions have been made based, at times, on external pressures. Sudan, whose attempts to buy ballistic missiles from the DPRK in 2008,<sup>30</sup> in clear violation of UNSCR 1718<sup>31</sup> were revealed in 2011 by Wikileaks, was apparently pushed to reverse its ties with the DPRK as the United States offered to lift Sudan's own economic embargo if it itself applied UN sanctions.<sup>32</sup> Egypt, a country that has invested a large amount of capital to develop the DPRK's mobile phone network, was also seeking to buy \$23 million-worth of North Korean rocket-propelled grenades in 2016,<sup>33</sup> before it allegedly decided to cut its ties with the DPRK because of direct American pressures.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Africa News, "Uganda; North Korea to Solve Police Housing Crisis," June 12, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Associated Press International, "Uganda Expels North Korea Military Experts over UN Sanction," October 20, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> NK News, "Uganda Claims it is Curbing Ties with North Korea," February 19, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> NK News, "Sudan Cuts Military Ties with North Korea," November 2, 2016

<sup>31</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Wikileaks: Sudan Negotiating Purchase of Missiles from North Korea," September 5, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Lifting of Sudan's Embargo Includes Commitment to Sanction on North Korea: Washington," July 12, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Daily Monitor, "Egypt Denies North Korea Rocket Propelled Grenades were Bought for its Military," October 3, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Arutz Sheva, "Report: Egypt cuts Ties with North Korea," September 13, 2017.

For others, the fear that illegal activity nexuses and hubs might be uncovered, and which would lead to costly sanctions and retaliation from the international community, might have prompted change. Tanzania received North Korean maintenance assistance for their MiG fighters,<sup>35</sup> and contracted North Korea to build an army museum.<sup>36</sup> They were however fooled by the DPRK when it opened traditional medical center Maibon Sukidor Medical that local authorities discovered was a sham as it offered dubious medical services and drugs.<sup>37</sup> The transfer of nearly 50 North Korean ships onto Tanzanian registration after UNSC 2270<sup>38</sup> appears suspiciously timely, however.

*b. Defensive bandwagoning – Refusing to conform*

A number of countries can however be labelled as serial violators, standing by their relations with the DPRK but more importantly standing by a number of illegal agreements and deals that they might not be able to find a cheap and accessible alternative for. Eritrea was, in 2017, in its third year as a UNSC violator. According to a United Nations panel monitoring, it was suggested the country attempted to purchase military communication equipment from Glocom, a North Korean front

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<sup>35</sup> NK News, “Tanzania Won’t Deny N. Korea is Providing Military Assistance,” August 15, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> BBC Monitoring Africa – Political, “North Korea to Assist in Building Army Museum in Tanzania,” August 31, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, “North Korea Opens Hospital in Tanzania – Media Report,” April 7, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, “Around 50 North Korea Ships Transfer to Tanzanian Nationality,” October 8, 2016.

company located in Malaysia. In this particular case, Eritrea is now under American sanctions that ban all equipment sales or interactions with its Navy.<sup>39</sup>

Mozambique was exposed as well by a UN Panel of Experts in 2017 as being in violation of missile shipments,<sup>40</sup> with a further investigations pending and which focuses on the dealing of the Haegeumgang Trading Corporation, a North Korean entity that sold guns to a Mozambican firm called Monte Bingo.<sup>41</sup> Further military training activities, as well as poaching and rhino horn trading with the DPRK,<sup>42</sup> sometimes using front companies and engaging into other illegal activities such as fishing were uncovered by a CNN investigation in 2018.<sup>43</sup> Mozambique has also been involved in a number of joint ventures with the DPRK, which were formed in 2013 and might have been dissolved by now.<sup>44</sup>

For Namibia who has engaged with the DPRK in a variety of sectors (commerce, transport, communication, defense, agriculture, energy, healthcare, education, environment<sup>45</sup>), cutting the DPRK out has been difficult, if not unwanted. North Korea built a munition factory in the Namibia Leopard Valley before the UNSC passed the 2004 sanctions. Mansudae was involved in 2002-2005 to build the factory,

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<sup>39</sup> Africa Newswire, "US Imposes New Sanctions on Eritrea's Navy over North Korea Links," April 9, 2017

<sup>40</sup> UN PoE Finds N.Korea Continue to Sell Military, Sanctioned Items," March 2, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Africa Review, "UN Probes Angola and Mozambique Deals with North Korea," September 12, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Daily Maverick, "Horns of a Dilemma – Mozambique Poaching Enriching North Korea's Leadership," July 13, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> CNN, "North Korea is Dodging Sanctions with Fish and Front Firms in Mozambique," February 3, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> BBC Monitoring Africa – Political, "Mozambique Denies Violating UN Sanctions Against North Korea," February 13, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> AFP, "Namibia, North Korea to Strengthen Economic Ties," March 20, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> and a further state house and a museum<sup>47</sup> amounting to more than US\$335 million, were contracted which Namibia claimed it had no knowledge about.<sup>48</sup> Matters are also complicated by the fact that Mansudae has built Namibia's new Defense Ministry headquarters. Reports in January 2017 suggesting Mansudae was now disguised as Chinese company shed light on the ambiguous and difficult nature of the relationship.<sup>49</sup> Eventually, Namibia slowly started to submit required United Nations reports, and ultimately claimed compliancy in late November 2017.<sup>50</sup>

*c. Opportunistic bandwagoning- Should we worry?*

Because a large number of African countries have decided to put a damper on their relationship with the DPRK, and despite the fact that a few countries will continue to engage with the DPRK, there might be a new window of opportunity for less scrupulous and more in-need countries. Indeed, some might like to make quick money out of a number of illegal activities that used to be performed by other African countries, especially when it comes to sectors such as service provisions. Thus a number of countries such as Togo are willing to use their own tankers to transport petroleum or coal to the DPRK, regardless of sanctions.<sup>51</sup> The Republic of Congo has started to set up medical professionals, equipment as well as training services from

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<sup>46</sup> UPI, "North Korea Constructed a Munition Factory in Namibia," March 16, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Mail & Guardian, "Namibia violates UN Sanctions Against North Korea," April 15, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Africa Arguments, "Is it all over Between Namibia and North Korea?" July 13, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> NK News, "Not Going Anywhere: North Koreas Still Working in Namibia," January 17, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Africa News, "Namibia: Govt Compliant on North Korea, Says Minister Nandi-Ndaitwah," November 22, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> NK News, "U.S. Requests Blacklisting of Ten Ships for Transporting From N.Korea," December 20, 2017.

2017 on, and for a period of 5 years.<sup>52</sup> The DPRK has also offered energy cooperation and prospection know-how to Algeria,<sup>53</sup> a country it has always maintained friendly relationship with since the DPRK sent support in 1958 to help them fight for their national liberation movement. Pyongyang has more recently offered to help Algeria with launching their own intelligence satellite, a move that would break a number of UNSCRs.<sup>54</sup> In early 2018, Niger, a country that does not have an official North Korean embassy, has reportedly engaged with the DPRK via its Nigerian ambassador to discuss new partnerships in the field of power, healthcare as well as infrastructure.<sup>55</sup> Just as for Algeria, it is unclear how such cooperation could proceed given the extent of current sanctions.

A few other countries such as Mauritania appear to have engaged with Pyongyang, with the DPRK Foreign Minister visiting several times in the past few years. Trade figures listed by Mauritania would amount to close to US\$15 million, and would concentrate on chemicals, metal and vehicles, but are hard to verify as there might be reporting error attributing trade deals to the DPRK while they were actually conducted by South Korea.<sup>56</sup> The Gambia has also engaged with the DPRK since 2014 to test out potential agricultural cooperation<sup>57</sup> while Gabon, a country that has an established relationship with Pyongyang already albeit no dedicated embassy has

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<sup>52</sup> NK News, “Congo Reveals Details of Health Protocol Signed with North Korea,” June 2, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Algeria Press Service, “Algeria, North Korea Examine Partnerships Relations in Energy,” April 27, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Morocco World News, “North Korea Offers to Help Algeria Launch its Own Intelligence Satellite,” November 17, 2017

<sup>55</sup> Daily Independent (Nigeria), “Niger Govt to Partner North Korea on Power, Health, Other Projects,” January 31, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> NK News, “North Korean Delegation Visits Mauritania Amid Diplomatic Pressure,” May 2, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> NK News, “In Angola, Potential for North Korean Investment in Agriculture,” July 23, 2014; Tendersinfo, “Gambia: North Korea Presidium Head Ends Three Day Visit to The Gambia,” April 5, 2010.



reportedly signed a cultural cooperation agreement with the DPRK early 2017 and was also discussing public health provisions.<sup>58</sup> A few countries show indication of a loose relationship with circumstantial evidence. This is the case for Guinea, a country with longstanding friendly ties linked to communist affinities in the 1970s and 1980s, sending students to the DPRK.<sup>59</sup> Cameroon has also, in the past few years, indicated that it would aim to work more closely with the DPRK.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, South Africa, Libya and Zimbabwe all have had rollercoaster relationships with the DPRK, and though they do not have close and formal ties anymore, some evidence might point to a renewal of potential closeness. In the case of South Africa, a number of North Korean diplomats were expelled in 2015 after they were found to be involved in forbidden rhinoceros horn trading.<sup>61</sup> Yet, the DPRK still maintains an embassy in Pretoria, and allegedly purchased a number of exotic animals for its Pyongyang zoo.<sup>62</sup> Yet, the relationship is often complicated by South Africa's official stance on weapons of mass destruction, and its condemnation of the DPRK's nuclear program. Zimbabwe has also maintained a very close relationship with the DPRK especially because of personal ties with former prime minister and president Robert Mugabe. The DPRK had trained soldiers in Zimbabwe since 1980,<sup>63</sup> signed a

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<sup>58</sup> BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, “North Korea, Gabon sign Cultural Cooperation Agreement,” March 31, 2017; BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, “North Korea, Gabon Discuss Public Health,” March 30, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> NK News, “Being African in the Pure-blooded, Juche Republic,” March 13, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Africa News, “Cameroon; Cameroon, North Korea Work for Closer Ties,” August 21, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Africa Review, “North Korea Diplomat Expelled from South Africa for Rhino Horn Trading,” December 24, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> NK News, “Where Does North Korea Buy Its Hyenas?” October 9, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> NK News, “Zimbabwe and North Korea: Uranium, Elephants and a Massacre,” October 30, 2013.

healthcare cooperation deal in 2006<sup>64</sup> while the DPRK also received a number of animals gifted to the regime in 2010.<sup>65</sup> With UNSCR2375, Zimbabwe's joint ventures with the DPRK have been under scrutiny from the international community,<sup>66</sup> and recent rapprochement between the DPRK and the ROK, as well as the potentially shifting nature of the relationship between the DPRK and the USA in 2018 and 2019 mean that Zimbabwe could return to support trade with the DPRK more extensively in the future. Lastly, Libya has also engaged in talks on military cooperation in 2017, despite a checkered history that has seen the DPRK potentially supplying uranium to Libya, and extensive American and British pressure onto Gaddafi while he was still in power to cut ties with the DPRK.<sup>67</sup> While any new talk of cooperation would more likely contravene sanctions, the current DPRK engagement via talk, as mentioned earlier, could pave the way for a renewal of more formal ties and activities.

## **Conclusions**

In 2018, the world has witness a sharp change of events on the Korean peninsula, with South Korean President Moon's opening gambit at the Winter Olympics toward North Korea. Engagement patterns between the DPRK and the ROK, as well as between the DPRK and the USA have changed, and this is particularly interesting in light of the DPRK's current situations when it comes to sanctions.

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<sup>64</sup> HIS Global Insight, "Pariahs Join Hands, as Zimbabwe and North Korea Sign Healthcare Deal," August 11, 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Africa News, "Zimbabwe: Govt Agency to Give North Korea Wild Animals," May 17, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Africa News, "Zimbabwe: Govt Buckles to UN Pressure on North Korea Dealings," October 24, 2017.

<sup>67</sup> NK News, "North Korea and Libya Discuss Military Cooperation Despite Sanctions," February 10, 2017.

The purpose of this article was to consider the DPRK's relationships with African countries in order to evaluate the impact of the current sanction might have had. The data clearly suggest that UNSCR sanctions have had an effect on dismantling some very long-lasting and deep relationships, such as Pyongyang's relationships with Angola, Uganda or Tanzania, and this is due to UNSCR 2321, 2371, 2375 and 2397's intense pressures on just about all areas of the DPRK's conventional trading spheres. By using Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat' theory to consider three particular behaviors (balancing, defensive bandwagoning and opportunistic bandwagoning), the analysis also highlights a number of countries that have engaged with the DPRK quite recently on topics related to health and science, irrespective of the current sanction regime, and potentially in defiance of an established Western-led world order that dictate sanctions and appropriate behaviors.

For the DPRK, removal of sanctions is crucial to achieve, and that nuclear diplomacy and bargaining with the United States could potentially lead to a scale down of the sanction regime. In case the DPRK's display of good behavior, or its own negotiation skills are not enough to make the UN and the US cave, it is likely that a number of countries will continue to flirt with illegality when it comes to interacting with Pyongyang, and that North Korea itself will pursue covered trade deals in order to maintain foreign currency earning. There might be new alliances with countries that have not had much diplomatic engagement with the DPRK, and which raise eyebrows as to whether they are legitimate relations or outputs for the DPRK to engage in further illegal activities. Malawi will receive an ambassador that is based in

Zimbabwe,<sup>68</sup> Gabon is discussing cultural and health cooperation with Pyongyang,<sup>69</sup> Niger is developing new partnerships on power grids, healthcare and infrastructure via the Nigerian ambassador.<sup>70</sup> Finally the new government structures in Libya might be interested in renewing a partnership with the DPRK on military grounds, thus breaking current sanctions from the get-go. This is true for the African continent, but should likewise be investigated in other parts of the world.

There are also clear practical conclusions and implications coming out of this particular research: given the current state of affairs with renewed DPRK-ROK dialogue, and summit diplomacy taking place between Washington and Pyongyang, the question of sanction removal will have to be tackled in the near future if North Korea is sought to be making appropriate progress toward peace. Indeed, sanctioning the DPRK while it is attempting to develop its economy while being involved in a potentially solid dialogue on nuclear and military issues with the ROK and the United States might no longer be possible. While it is clear that scholarship focusing on the earlier days of the DPRK's relationship with African countries highlighted political engagement and ideological quest, the DPRK now pursues relationships for its economic development

Then, having a clearer understanding of the DPRK's relations and foreign policy development as well as trade channels, beyond that of its relations with China for example, is crucial.

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<sup>68</sup> Africa News, "Malawi: UK Endorses Malawi-North Korea Ties," February 24, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, "North Korea, Gabon sign Cultural Cooperation Agreement," March 31, 2017; BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, "North Korea, Gabon Discuss Public Health," March 30, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Daily Independent (Nigeria), "Niger Govt to Partner North Korea on Power, Health, Other Projects," January 31, 2018.

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