Defying United Nations sanctions: three reasons for African engagement with North Korea

Hoog, T.A. van der

JUNE 16, 2022

KOREA ECONOMIC INSTITUTE OF AMERICA
ACADEMIC PAPER SERIES

KEI
Promoting Dialogue and Understanding
Between Korea and the United States

DEFYING UNITED NATIONS SANCTIONS: THREE REASONS FOR AFRICAN ENGAGEMENT WITH NORTH KOREA

By Tycho van der Hoog

ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) sanctions against North Korea are weakened by structural evasion techniques and weak enforcement. The African continent is a crucial node in the global illicit networks of North Korea. This paper examines three motives for African states to cooperate with North Korea, with a particular focus on the context of southern Africa: historical affinity (reciprocity), the practical issue of maintenance dependency (necessity), and the presence of weak enforcement regimes (opportunity). Based on a deep reading of UN Panel of Experts reports, academic literature and policy papers, novel archival material, and an interview with a defected North Korean diplomat, this paper argues that solutions to strengthen the sanctions regime can be successful only if they are grounded in African initiatives.

Key Words: *North Korea, southern Africa, United Nations, sanctions, cooperation*

INTRODUCTION

Over 15 years have passed since the United Nations Security Council first introduced sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea). The multilateral punitive measures followed the detonation of a North Korean nuclear device in 2006 and have over time been strengthened by additional resolutions, making it the largest sanctions regime in history. While this has done little to curb North Korea's nuclear capabilities or ballistic missile program, it successfully branded the country as an international pariah and thereby further isolated the North Korean regime. The sanctions have made it undeniably more difficult for North Korea to market its arms industry and related technical services, to trade in luxury goods, and to access the global financial system. However, the United Nations Panel of Experts, a body tasked with monitoring the effectiveness of the sanctions regime, repeatedly observes structural patterns of sanctions evasion of North Korea and weak enforcement by member states.[1]

Tycho van der Hoog *is a PhD candidate at the African Studies Centre at Leiden University. The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any organizations they are affiliated with.* *This paper is the 127th in KEI's Academic Paper Series. As part of this program, KEI commissions and distributes up to ten papers per year on original subjects of current interest to over 5,000 Korea watchers, government officials, think tank experts, and scholars around the United States and the world. At the end of the year, these papers are compiled and published in KEI's On Korea volume. For more information, please visit www.keia.org/ aps_on_korea.*

The African continent is heavily featured in the periodic reporting from the Panel of Experts. This signifies Africa's crucial role as a node in North Korean global illicit networks and warrants further questions about how and why African-North Korean relations are being maintained, despite significant Western pressure to sever such ties. To date, however, the Korean studies community has focused predominantly on the motives of North Korea for engaging with the outside world, and not the other way around. Therefore, this paper explores the question of why countries in southern Africa cooperate with North Korea regardless of its isolated position.[2] The empirical focus on the southern African region instead of the entire continent allows for more in-depth analysis and detailed examples, but it is expected that many of the findings can be extrapolated to other parts of Africa.[3]

Before the end of the Cold War, North Korea was a very different country than it is today. Between the 1960s and 1980s the DPRK sponsored numerous African liberation movements and newly independent governments, and enjoyed a certain standing in the world as an anti-imperial force, one that was also economically more successful than its South Korean neighbor. The demise of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and the subsequent collapse of North Korean society prompted the DPRK to radically change its foreign policy. Instead of aiding befriended countries with agricultural support, construction work, and weapons, earning hard foreign currency became the main objective of the DPRK. African-North Korean relations thus continued to exist but were significantly altered in light of changing geopolitical circumstances.[4]

Several academic studies explore North Korean foreign policy and the African continent during the Cold War era, but their focus on the pre-1990 era naturally excludes the contemporary connections between the DPRK and Africa.[5] In contrast, a number of recent policy papers detail North Korean sanction-busting activities, often in Africa.[6] The question remains how the first strand of historically informed studies can be connected to the second strand of contemporary policy analysis. Some studies attempt to bridge this temporal division, but such works are usually preoccupied with North Korean motives for cooperation and do not appreciate African agency.[7] This paper will primarily consider African reasons for collaborating with the DPRK, with an explicit reference to the history that binds all parties together. It is based on UN Panel of Expert reports, academic and policy research, novel archival material from South Korea, Africa and Europe, and an interview with a defected North Korean diplomat.

The first section will provide a brief overview of common patterns of North Korean engagement in Africa. The subsequent part will probe three explanations as to why African countries engage with North Korea: historical affinity (reciprocity), the practical issue of maintenance dependency (necessity), and the presence of weak enforcement regimes (opportunity). The benefit of this concise review for policy makers is an explanation of why the United Nations sanctions regime fails in relation to southern Africa, which is essential for generating new ideas for improving the sanctions regime. The final part will discuss such remedies with an explicit focus on African agency and argues that successful implementation of the UN sanctions can be achieved only with the involvement of African actors.

NORTH KOREA IN AFRICA

The military and economic sanctions of the UN target the most important areas of cooperation between North Korea and southern African states. This covers the main traceable sources of foreign revenue for the DPRK in Africa: military services and construction work.[8] While the next part will cover various examples, this section will discuss patterns that generally characterize North Korean illicit behavior in southern Africa. Most importantly, the distinctions between their embassies and companies are blurred and often irrelevant. A former North Korean diplomat who worked in African embassies noted a fundamental change in strategy when the Eastern Bloc collapsed in the 1990s. Instead of funding a growing diplomatic presence in Africa, the goal changed to maintaining the status quo. By generating revenue, diplomats keep foreign missions open: diplomats who outperform their colleagues benefit from personal incentives such as medals, honors, and the opportunity to stay longer abroad. There is no set amount directed from Pyongyang; the main motivation for diplomats is self-help.[9]

Today, survival is likely the main driver for generating income. It is conceivable that COVID-19 has exacerbated the distance between Pyongyang and North Koreans residing in Africa, which might be another impulse for the latter to search for ways to make money. In addition to its

network of regular embassies, the DPRK established trade offices in Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.[10] Importantly, North Korean hubs perform regional or transnational roles in Africa and are thus not bound to service only a single country. Diplomats "continue to play key roles" in facilitating illegitimate activities, as they conduct brokering activities and serve as shipping companies' agents or cash carriers.[11] The North Koreans who reside in Africa are locally grounded. Diplomats and businessmen are usually staying in one place or region for several years on end, they speak the lingua franca, and they know how to navigate local politics, businesses, and other stakeholders.[12]

Instead of large, long-term contracts, North Koreans often seek ad-hoc and smaller-scale profits. The modus operandi of many North Korean operatives is opportunistic trade that exploits historic relationships, local circumstances, and weak enforcement. It is likely that not all North Korean activities in Africa are directed by the Kim regime and organizations such as Bureau 39. Rather than a top-down approach directed from Pyongyang, we are mainly witnessing a bottom-up approach to trade, one that is informed by local incentives. The North Korean embassy system is in fact a decentralized system of foreign missions that basically operate as companies and seek to earn money whenever the opportunity arises. The same is applicable to smaller North Korean companies based in Africa, or stranded North Korean doctors.[13]

In terms of the practical organization of trade, the North Koreans are known to make creative use of local opportunities in Africa. UN reports show that North Korea is incredibly skilled in circumventing sanctions by using "increasingly sophisticated and diversified techniques."[14] Hundreds of North Korean trade companies are active in the world.[15] Recurring patterns include the extensive use of shell companies and front companies, making it difficult to trace individual companies as they often have many local subsidiaries and different names. The use of local banks and the endorsement by local political elites facilitate trade. While the majority of recorded illicit DPRK transport involves containerized cargo, planes are also used: in 2009 Ethiopian Airlines transported five tons of North Korean arms material through regular passenger flights, including engines of battle tanks and armored vehicles.[16] Although it should be noted that China is complicit in North Korean illegal ventures in Africa,[17] the DPRK oversees its own foreign policy.[18]

AFRICAN MOTIVES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The key to North Korea's success in Africa is their early support of African liberation movements in exile, often years—and sometimes decades—before political independence was achieved. Southern Africa was the last region of the continent to be liberated from colonial or white-settler rule. Most southern African states are relatively young in terms of political independence and are ruled by victorious liberation movements, organizations that have transformed themselves into mainstream political parties and continue to win (or suppress) elections.[19] The ties that bind African political elites and the North Korean regime together remain relevant up until this day. Yet, the notion that this is a result of affectionate friendship between dictators needs to be questioned and then discarded. It may seem logical to connect the rule of authoritarian African leaders with a desire to collaborate with the rogue Kim regime, but the reality is much more complicated.

It is true that in the first instance African-North Korean bilateral ties often revolved around the cordial personal ties between the first presidents of independent African countries and Kim Il-sung. Part of the effective DPRK strategy in Africa was indulging exiled African leaders before they came to power.[20] Throughout the Cold War, there was a degree of ideological exchange, as North Korea exported its ideology of self-reliance (juche) through Juche Study Centers, translated works of literature, and seminars.[21] On a political party-to-party level, delegations were exchanged and political training in Pyongyang for African cadres was a normal occurrence.[22] Despite these events, there is little evidence of genuine acceptance of North Korean ideology.

During the Cold War, the behavior of African actors was mainly informed by practical considerations, and this was primarily geared towards achieving and consolidating independence. African liberation movements and subsequent independent states were not passive recipients of North Korean aid: they utilized the benefits of their alliance with the DPRK to their own advantage. The importance of African agency is underlined in the next sections, which detail three African motives for engaging with North Korea in the twenty-first century.

Reciprocity: Historical Relationships

North Korean assistance during the twentieth century is ingrained in the institutional memory of several former African liberation movements. In 1986, Sam Nujoma, the

later president of Namibia, thanked Kim Il-sung for "the practical material assistance, political and diplomatic support" of the Koreans. Kim assured him that the DPRK "will firmly stand by you in the future too."[23] Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe, proclaimed in 1987 that "the people of Zimbabwe will always remember the invaluable assistance they received from their Korean friends."[24] Such statements were not uncommon, and even today some African leaders explicitly refer to the support of North Korea during the twentieth century in order to justify ongoing engagements with Pyongyang. One recent example is the Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, who praised the training assistance of the DPRK during a graduation ceremony of new policy recruits: "The DPRK always gives us technical support - I do not see any problem with them."[25]

Today's postcolonial elites of southern Africa include numerous influential politicians with personal memories of North Korean assistance: they travelled to Pyongyang for conferences, received translated books about Kim Il-sung, benefited from military training in exile, or remember North Korean development aid. Several African regimes decided that the monuments that their leaders had witnessed in Pyongyang should be replicated in Africa after independence. Construction work thus developed into a significant revenue stream for the DPRK. The buildings constructed by migrant North Korean workers offer a unique window into the nature of African-DPRK ties: they represent a tangible compensation for the political debts incurred through North Korea's historical aid, and simultaneously illustrate the interest of certain postcolonial African regimes in the aesthetics of North Korean power. Instead of hiring local talent to design heritage sites, African nationalism is conveyed through North Korean visual language—compelling evidence of the influence of the historical ties between some liberation movements and the DPRK.[26]

Numerous constructions were built by Mansudae Overseas Projects (MOP), one of the largest North Korean art studios that has been active in Africa. In southern Africa alone, MOP has built statues, museums, cemeteries, state houses, and other public buildings in Angola, Botswana, both Congos, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.[27] The latter is a perfect example of the reciprocity hypothesis. The ruling party, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), benefited from North Korean aid during its struggle for liberation. SWAPO has been in power since independence in 1990, winning every election. Sam Nujoma, the president, hired Mansudae to construct the National Heroes' Acre in Namibia, a cemetery for the war heroes of the struggle in which the DPRK was important, and the office of the president (the State House). Even though Nujoma stepped down as president in 2005, Namibia continued to award Mansudae closed tender contracts for massive public projects, including a national history museum and the Ministry of Defense headquarters. The common denominator between these projects is the highly symbolic nature of each building, as physical reminders of the rule and legitimacy of the ruling party. This is a trend across the region.[28] The MOP office in Windhoek also operated beyond the Namibian border and executed projects in Angola, Botswana, and Mozambique.[29]

For North Korea, the construction business offers opportunities to "advance prohibited programs or disguise earnings from arms or proliferation-related transfers." Illicit revenue can be disguised as legitimate payment, and the UN observed that particularly in African countries the project values appear to be inflated.[30] Since Security Council Resolution 2321 was passed in 2016, the UN prohibits the construction and maintenance of North Korean monuments, which heavily restricted Mansudae's ability to operate in Africa. The UN Security Council ultimately designated MOP and all its subsidiaries, including their operations in Namibia and Angola.[31] In 2017, 242 North Korean nationals left Namibia and various ongoing construction projects were transferred to other companies.[32] This development did not herald the end of North Korean construction in Africa. In 2020, The Sentry discovered widespread activities of a smaller and overlooked art studio in several African countries, Korea Paekho Trading Corporation. In contrast to the grand, eye-catching structures of Mansudae, Paekho constructed smaller and more local projects, such as a traffic circle or a grandstand. However, the combined revenue of numerous smaller projects probably still amounts to a considerable sum of money.[33]

Necessity: Maintenance Dependency

Arms trade remains "one of the most profitable revenue sources" for the DPRK.[34] Contemporary African armies are in part dependent on the repair services of North Korea, as they continue to rely on outdated hardware from the Cold War era. North Korea maintains a profitable niche in the global arms market through the repairing of vintage equipment.[35] It has an important advantage because a dwindling number of competitors offer similar services and the DPRK requests relatively low prices.[36] Not coincidentally,

African armies used to benefit from North Korean weapons during the Cold War, which were often provided for free or cheap. The DPRK thus "continues to exploit long-standing military relationships in Africa to provide training for policy and paramilitary units."[37]

During the early Cold War, the DPRK produced weapons through license agreements with the Soviet Union and China. Popular models were reverse-engineered or modified and later, locally designed weapon-systems were produced. Between 1960-1980 the DPRK was a major player in the global arms industry.[38] This era intersected with the struggle for liberation in southern Africa, during which North Korea offered military training and weapons to the armies of national liberation movements. Training camps were established between the 1970s and 1980s in Angola and Tanzania, two important Frontline States in the battle against the apartheid regime of South Africa.[39] Armed "freedom fighters" from various African liberation movements were able to train in exile. For advanced cadets, training was offered in Pyongyang and other cities in North Korea.[40]

African liberation armies thus benefited from North Korean support in the years leading up to independence. When independence was secured, those ties remained important as liberation movements were turned into political regimes. North Korea helped to consolidate the newly found power through the training and arming of army brigades and presidential security.[41] Especially in the 1980s, several governments requested the aid of North Korea. Among them were Zimbabwe with the infamous Fifth Brigade, but also Mozambique, Zambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, the Seychelles, and Namibia.[42] Outside actors, such as the United Kingdom or the United States (U.S.), tried to dissuade these countries from dealing with these countries, to no avail. From the perspective of many African states, North Korea was a reliable and trustworthy ally.

It was only the end of the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the North Korean economy that put an end to the generous DPRK support in Africa. Similar to the construction business, the friendly military relations that had existed for a long time were utilized to generate money. Today, the DPRK offers a wide range of training courses, repair services, and military hardware. Andrea Berger noted that the volume of revenue that North Korea generates through arms trade, and the number of clients, are important metrics for the success of the sanctions regime.[43] Unfortunately, a close reading of the past twelve years of UN reports reveals numerous examples of military deals between the DPRK and African states. This is likely an underestimation of the actual amount of trade because the UN relies on incidental reporting from member states, research, and the media. A few examples from southern Africa illustrate patterns that are noteworthy.

In 2014 the South African authorities interdicted the ship *Westerhever* in the port of Durban and alerted the UN, as the cargo contained military equipment destined for the Republic of Congo. Labelled as "spare parts of bulldozer," the vessel actually contained spare parts for T-54/T-55 military tanks.[44] The use of such "knock-down kits" is a technique used by the DPRK to conceal arms export.[45] This was not an isolated incident, as at least three other previous deliveries were identified.[46] The UN Panel of Experts noted that this case demonstrates a "lack of understanding and/or implementation of the relevant resolutions by Member States."[47] It also demonstrates the inventiveness of North Korea in circumventing sanctions. The Congo-DPRK connection that was highlighted through the *Westerhever* incident was "military-to-military in nature." Congo provided lodging for North Korean operatives to "ensure secrecy and appropriate working conditions" and the barracks were almost completely self-sufficient, with "embedded cooks, doctors and interpreters and virtually all food and supplies" coming from North Korea.[48] The neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo bought weapons (including automatic pistols, assault rifles, and mines) from the DPRK between 2014-2015. North Koreans trained the Congolese Presidential Guard and special police in a military base near Kinshasa. In a twist of irony, some of these arms were eventually deployed in a United Nations mission.[49]

Similar to Congo, Angola appeared to procure spare parts and equipment from North Korea. Between 2011-2015 Angola bought equipment for submarines and military boats from Green Pine, a designated North Korean arms company.[50] This is part of a historical military relationship between both countries, as North Korea had been training the Angolan Presidential Guard since the 1990s and supported the victorious liberation movement (the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) during the struggle for independence. In 2017, there was still an 80-member military advisory mission based in the country, but following international pressure, a total of 152 North Korean nationals withdrew from the country in the same year.[51] Mozambique signed a $6 million contract with Haegeumgang Trading Corporation for the delivery of

man-portable air defense system components and training equipment, P-18 early warning radar components, the refurbishment of T-55 tanks, and the modernization of a Pechora missile system.[52] Haegeumgang falls under the designated Ministry of People's Armed Forces and this project was overseen by a North Korean diplomat assigned to the embassy in South Africa.[53] The company was also active in Tanzania, where it signed a €10.49 million contract for the repairing of Pechora systems and a P-12 defense radar. While Tanzania informed the UN in 2014 that it had terminated its military ties to North Korea, it appeared that the cooperation was resumed in 2016-2017.[54] A few years earlier, in 2013, a different case of Tanzanian-Korean ties was reported: around 18 North Korean military technicians were based in Tanzania for the refurbishment of F-7 fighter jets.[55]

Whereas in the case of the construction business, agreements were usually based on the relations between African and Korean political regimes (the ruling parties), military cooperation is often conducted on the level of armies and defense ministries. Occasionally both types of businesses merge. For example, the construction company Mansudae Overseas Project operated partially as a front for KOMID, the main arms dealer of North Korea. In Namibia, MOP and KOMID cooperated in various projects around 2010, including the construction of a munitions factory, a military base, a military academy, and the headquarters of the Ministry of Defense. Two KOMID representatives in Namibia enjoyed diplomatic accreditation in South Africa, where they worked as Second Secretary and Third Secretary at the embassy in Pretoria. In practice, they spend most of their time in Windhoek.[56] KOMID also delivered equipment for military explosives and the production of propellants to the Namibian army.[57] The construction of munitions factories is something that has occurred in other African nations as well.

Opportunity: Weak Enforcement Regimes

The DPRK is exceptionally skilled in circumventing sanctions, as a recent RAND Corporation report shows.[58] The UN claims that "lack of awareness and understanding" of the resolutions allowed the DPRK to "exploit long-standing past relationships with African countries."[59] A major problem is that a significant number of African states do not submit mandatory reports to the United Nations about the implementation of the sanctions.[60] North Korea indeed benefits from weak enforcement regimes in southern Africa. Local regulatory authorities are subject to underfunding and do not consider North Korea a high priority. In 2015, a North Korean diplomat and a taekwondo master were arrested in Mozambique while possessing $99,300 in cash and 4.5 kg of rhino horn—this was not a unique case, but part of a recurring pattern.[61] While the increasing isolation of the North Korean economy is an important reason for Pyongyang to pursue illicit enterprises, there is again a historical precedent.[62] Already in 1989, before the end of the Cold War and years before the first sanctions, North Korean diplomats were caught smuggling rhino horn out of Zambia.[63] Contemporary cases of North Korean diplomatic involvement in criminal networks thus built upon decades of experience.[64]

The DPRK appears to use legitimate business structures to conceal illegal activities, using "aliases, agents, offices and complicit companies based in multiple jurisdictions in ways that follow global trading patterns."[65] It exploits the time periods between Security Council designations and member state implementation "by changing names, directors and addresses," resulting in multiple aliases for North Korean companies.[66] Construction projects often include the use of North Korean labor, whose working conditions amount to modern slavery. Such circumstances not only violate international sanctions but also a wide range of (local) labor laws.[67] Forced labor is deployed in both civilian and military projects.[68] It is estimated that the repatriation of overseas laborers as a result of UN sanctions costs North Korea hundreds of millions of dollars, which underlines the importance of this source of revenue.[69] In order to circumvent the financial sector, the DPRK prefers payments in bulk cash and gold. In 2015, Mansudae withdrew $280,000 in cash from a local bank in Namibia and transported this to Pyongyang through its staff. A total of 14 employees each carried $20,000 as "travel expenses."[70] A consistent problem is the abuse of diplomatic immunity by North Korean diplomats, making it much harder to detect prohibited behavior.[71]

The Sentry's report about the North Korean art studio Korea Paekho Trading Corporation is an interesting case study of the ways that North Korea "exploit weak institutional controls and jurisdictions with high levels of corruptions." Two North Korean businessmen formed a local company in the Democratic Republic of Congo, opened a U.S. dollar-denominated account at a local bank, engaged with high-level politicians and constructed several public work projects. Their passports indicated an official governmental status and their work violated UN sanctions. Paekho is

designated by the UN but is expected to operate through numerous shell companies and different names.[72] The businessmen were fluent in French and apparently stayed in Africa for a prolonged period. They had strong ties to local government authorities. One advantage that North Koreans exploited was the ambiguity of their nationality: in official documents they were recorded as "Korean" and they used the "KR" nationality code, instead of DPRK. Local reporting referred to their company as South Korean even though this was not the case.[73]

AFRICAN SOLUTIONS

It is unclear how COVID-19 has impacted North Korea's operations in Africa, but the North Korean border closure has likely hampered sanction-busting activities to some extent, at least in the case of trade in tangible goods and international travel. Kim Jong-un's acknowledgement of a public health crisis in May 2022 demonstrates that the domestic situation is North Korea's number one priority right now.[74] The findings of this study are based on the assumption that North Korea's borders will reopen in due time and the knowledge that sanctions do not target humanitarian aid. The Kim regime remains a tremendous security risk to the world, and importantly, also to its own population.[75] In the absence of diplomatic and military solutions, sanctions have become "the central instrument of the international community in dealing with the threat from North Korea."[76] The numerous examples of evasion techniques in this paper beg the question of how UN sanctions can be improved. While the UN is not the only entity that has introduced punitive measures, it is one of the most important organizations to do so because it shapes global norms: its broad membership demands a global application of the same policies against the DPRK and adjacent sanction regimes (such as from the European Union) built upon the UN resolutions.

Berger rightfully notes that "Pyongyang is largely immune to external influence."[77] It is certainly necessary to continue designating North Korean nationals and entities in order to tighten existing UN sanctions, but at the same time more progress can be made by reducing the demand for North Korean products and services. This paper shows that in practice, southern African countries cooperate with North Korea for a combination of reasons. Usually, contemporary trade builds upon relations that were forged during the era of African decolonization. In several cases a dependency on repair and training services, and weak enforcement regimes come into play. Just as we need to take African motives for engagement seriously, improving the sanctions regime needs to be inclusive of African agency.

Solutions need to be conscious of regional diversity. Africa is not a unitary actor. In southern Africa alone, there is, for example, a huge difference between Botswana and Zimbabwe. Botswana explicitly severed its ties to North Korea following the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in 2014, which detailed grave human rights abuses.[78] In Zimbabwe, on the other hand, the viewpoint of the regime is influenced by the Western sanctions against Zimbabwe; sanctions are thus perceived as an instrument for Western-led regime change. Many African countries harbor strong anti-U.S. views, not only because of those sanctions but also because of the unhelpful role that the U.S. played in the decolonization of the continent. In short, the region can be divided between those countries that are more receptive to support the UN and those that are more skeptical. North Korea benefits mostly from a select number of states: in southern Africa this includes Namibia and Zimbabwe, while other examples are DR Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, and Tanzania.[79]

Solutions also need to appreciate African agency. In the past, the United States or individual European countries have occasionally successfully exerted (bilateral) pressure on the states that most often engage with North Korea. As donor countries of African states, their influence is perhaps larger than the UN. For example, in the case of Tanzania and the F-7 fighter jets, it was alleged that pressure from the United States resulted in the expulsion of North Korean technicians.[80] The role of individual African states or African regional bodies is overlooked, but their support of the UN sanctions regime would open new possibilities. In southern Africa, the key might be South Africa: it is the most powerful economy in the region and the African National Congress regime has historically fewer ties to the DPRK compared to neighboring states. The indictment of the *Westerhever* indicates the possible effectiveness of South African cooperation. The North Korean embassy in Pretoria has been "a key a source of illicit funds," and has been linked to illicit activities in Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.[81] Cracking down on this regional hub will mean tremendous progress. In terms of multilateral organizations, the African Union or regional organizations such as the Southern African

Development Community (SADC) do not play a role at the moment. If they can be persuaded to prioritize North Korea and sanctions in a similar way as, for example, the European Union, it will constitute a tipping point.

Solutions also need to include a renewed supply of information. Data about North Korean activities are crucial for maintaining the sanctions regime. Most importantly, state reporting to the UN needs to be increased. The Panel of Experts noted that many non-reporting countries have a "long history of cooperation" with the DPRK and this often concerns African states.[82] It would be an interesting idea to open an affiliate office of the Panel of Experts in Africa, for example in Nairobi, which has been a UN headquarters since 1996. In addition, civil society has traditionally been important in revealing illicit behavior and needs to be supported. Naming and shaming techniques proved useful in pressuring African states, such as Namibia, to sever ties with the DPRK. Reporting from organizations such as The Sentry, The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, NK News, Africa Confidential, and others, has unearthed new data. The UN Panel of Experts partially relies on such reporting to produce their monitoring reports. Most organizations are, however, based in the Western world. It would be rewarding to fund African research and investigative journalism about North Korean operations in the continent.

Outside actors, which include not only the United States and European Union but also other parts of the world, can play a positive role in developing African-based solutions. In principle, they can use their influence to nudge influential African states and multilateral organizations to take ownership of the North Korean problem. They can fund the improvement of local enforcement by training port officials and audit committees of banks, and fund the development of African research and reporting. In addition, they should consider offering viable alternatives for North Korean services, particularly in the field of defense.

ENDNOTES

[1] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2010/571, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009)," United Nations Security Council, November 5, 2010, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/DPRK%20S%202010%20571%20PoE%20Report.pdf.

[2] Southern Africa is in this paper geographically defined according to the membership of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Southern Africa has been described by the historian Jan-Bart Gewald as "a single whole, albeit with different accents." During the past hundreds of years, the region has been tied together by a shared cultural history and economic institutions. This has been reinforced by the fact that in the second half of the twentieth century, southern Africa was the last part of the African continent that was not yet liberated from colonial or white-settler rule. Places like Tanzania, in particular, were important hubs for exiled African elites from neighboring countries. Jan-Bart Gewald, *To Grahamstown and Back: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of Southern Africa* (Leiden: Leiden University, 2014), 23; *George Roberts, Revolutionary State-Making in Dar Es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War*, 1961-1974 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[3] Examples of other African states that have a high level of cooperation with the DPRK include Egypt and Uganda, among others.

[4] Tycho van der Hoog, "On the success and failure of North Korean development aid in Africa," in *NKEF Policy and Research Paper Series: Ideology and economic policy in North Korea*, ed. K. Yonho (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 2022), 31-42.

[5] Sang-Seek Park, "Africa and Two Koreas: A Study of African Non-Alignment," *African Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (1978): 73-88, https://doi.org/10.2307/523764; Jide Owoeye, "The Metamorphosis of North Korea's African Policy," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 7 (1991): 630-45, https://doi.org/10.2307/2645381; Y.C. Kim, "North Korea and the Third World," in *North Korea in a Regional and Global Context*, eds. Robert A. Scalapino and Hongkoo Lee (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies University of California, and Berkely Center for Korean Studies,1986), 327-44, https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/ieas/KRM_011.pdf; Joseph S. Bermudez, *Terrorism, the North Korean Connection* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990); Charles K. Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World*, 1950-1992 (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2013); Benjamin R. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader: North Korea and the Third World*, 1st edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

[6] J. Rademeyer, "Diplomats and Deceit: North Korea's Criminal Activities in Africa," Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime DPRK Report, September 2017; Annie DuPre, Nicolas Kasprzyk, and Noël Stott, "Cooperation between African States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," Institute for Security Studies Research Report, November 30, 2016, https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/research-report-dprk.pdf; Andrea Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era* (London: Routledge, 2016); King Mallory, "North Korean Sanctions Evasion Techniques" (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, September 23, 2021), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1537-1.html; "Overt Affairs: How North Korean Businessmen Busted Sanctions in the Democratic Republic of Congo," The Sentry, August 2020, https://thesentry.org/reports/overt-affairs/; Rosa S. Ko, "An Exploratory Analysis of North Korea's Relationship with Africa: From the Cold War to Now" (Nairobi: Sochin Research Institute, 2022).

[7] Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966-2008* (London: Routledge, 2010); Seth Ephrussi, "Life in the Shadow: An Examination of the Minor Foreign Relations of the DPRK" (Unpublished MA thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014); Bruce E. Bechtol, *North Korean Military Proliferation in the Middle East and Africa: Enabling Violence and Instability* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018).

[8] Cyberwarfare, including attacks on cryptocurrency attacks, seems to become a major revenue stream for the DPRK but it is unclear if and how the African continent plays a role in this domain. United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2022/132, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2569 (2021)," United Nations Security Council, March 1, 2022, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/252/09/PDF/N2225209.pdf?OpenElement; Rosa S. Ko, "An Exploratory Analysis of North Korea's Relationship with Africa: From the Cold War to Now," 21-22.

[9] Interview with a defected North Korean diplomat, July 19, 2021.

[10] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2013/337, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2050 (2012)," United Nations Security Council, June 11, 2013, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2013_337.pdf.

[11] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2015/131, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2141 (2014)," United Nations Security Council, February 23, 2015, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/015/99/PDF/N1501599.pdf?OpenElement.

[12] "Overt Affairs: How North Korean Businessmen Busted Sanctions in the Democratic Republic of Congo," The Sentry.

[13] Ifang Bremer, "North Korea pursues medical cooperation with African countries during pandemic," *NK News*, March 31, 2022, https://www.nknews.org/2022/03/north-korea-pursues-medical-cooperation-with-african-countries-during-pandemic/.

[14] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2016/157, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2207 (2015)," United Nations Security Council, February 24, 2016, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2016_157.pdf.

[15] Interview with a defected North Korean diplomat.

[16] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2013/337, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2050 (2012)."

[17] Benjamin R. Young, "North Korea in Africa: Historical Solidarity, China's Role, and Sanctions Evasion" (Washington, D.C.: United Sates Institute of Peace, 2021).

[18] Rosa S. Ko, "An Exploratory Analysis of North Korea's Relationship with Africa: From the Cold War to Now."

[19] Henning Melber, "From Liberation Movements to Governments: On Political Culture in Southern Africa," *African Sociological Review* 6, no. 1 (2002): 161-72.

[20] See for a selection of visits of southern African liberation leaders to North Korea: University of the Western Cape (UWC) Special Collections, Allen Isaacman Collection, FRELIMO, Voc da Revolucao, no. 59 (July 1978); Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) Library, Pamphlet Collection, Angola: National Liberation Movements: MPLA; National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK), FCO 21/2527, Relations between North Korea and other countries; NAUK, FCO 45/536, Communist activities in Zambia; NAUK, FCO 106/850, Political relations between Zambia and communist countries; Boga Thura Manatsha, "Geopolitical Implications of President Seretse Khama's 1976 State Visit to North Korea," *Botswana Notes and Records* 50 (2018): 138-52; Lyong Choi and Il-young Jeong, "North Korea and Zimbabwe, 1978-1982: From the Strategic Alliance to the Symbolic Comradeship between Kim Il Sung and Robert Mugabe," *Cold War History* 17, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 329-49, https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2017.1328406.

[21] University of Namibia (UNAM) Archives, PA4/5/421, Study of the Juche Idea: 1979-1990; UNAM Archives, PA3/6/117, Study of the Juche Idea, Tokyo: International Institute of the Juche Idea, 1982.

[22] Kim Il-sung, "Let Us Develop South-South Cooperation. Congratulatory Speech at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries on South-South Cooperation," in *Kim Il Sung: Works* 40 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1995).

[23] Tycho van der Hoog, *Monuments of Power: The North Korean Origin of Nationalist Monuments in Namibia and Zimbabwe* (Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden, 2019), 47-49.

[24] Benjamin R. Young, "An Emotional Relationship: Trust, Admiration, and Fear in North Korea-Zimbabwe Relations, 1976-1988," *S/N Korean Humanities* 4, no. 2 (2018): 144.

[25] Andrea Berger, "Disrupting North Korea's Military Markets," *Survival* 58, no. 3 (2016): 101.

[26] Tycho van der Hoog, "The Heroes of History: African Liberation Through a North Korean Lens," in *Decoding Dictatorial Statues*, ed. Ted Hyunhak Yoon and Bernke Klein Zandvoort (Eindhoven: Onomatopee, 2019), 194-203.

[27] Onejoon Che, *International Friendship: The Gifts from Africa* (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2022).

[28] Tycho van der Hoog, *Monuments of Power: The North Korean Origin of Nationalist Monuments in Namibia and Zimbabwe*.

[29] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)," United Nations Security Council, February 27, 2017, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/084/05/PDF/N1608405.pdf?OpenElement; United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2018/171, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2345 (2017)," United Nations Security Council, March 5, 2018, https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/8340837.95547485.html; United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2019/171, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2407 (2018)," United Nations Security Council, March 5, 2019, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_171.pdf.

[30] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2014/147, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2094 (2013)," United Nation Security Council, March 6, 2014, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/232/27/PDF/N1423227.pdf?OpenElement.

[31] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[32] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2018/171, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2345 (2017)."

[33] "Overt Affairs: How North Korean Businessmen Busted Sanctions in the Democratic Republic of Congo," The Sentry.

[34] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2014/147, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2094 (2013)."

[35] Andrea Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era*.

[36] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2014/147, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2094 (2013)."

[37] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2016/157, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2207 (2015)."

[38] Andrea Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era*.

[39] NAUK, FCO 21/5260, Arms sales to and from North Korea; Bermudez, *Terrorism, the North Korean Connection*; Bruce E. Bechtol, *North Korean Military Proliferation in the Middle East and Africa: Enabling Violence and Instability*.

[40] NAUK, FCO 31/948, Political relations between Somali Democratic Republic and North Korea; South African Department of Foreign Affairs Archives (SADFAA), 1.191.1, North Korea political situation & developments.

[41] NAUK, FCO 21/2319, Relations between North Korea and countries other than the UK.

[42] Republic of Korea Diplomatic Archives (ROKDA, 15765), 북한의 대짐바브웨 군사고문단 파견, 1981; NAUK, FCO 106/464, Military assistance to Zimbabwe from North Korea; SADFAA, 1.191.1, North Korea political situation & developments; NAUK, FCO 36/2764, Involvement of Korea in Rhodesian problem; ROKDA, 9351, 북한의 대 아프리카지역 국가 군사 및 경제 원조 현황; ROKDA, 20368, 북한·아프리카지역 관계, 1983-84; NAUK, FCO 106/850, Political relations between Zambia and communist countries; NAUK, FCO 21/3231, North Korean military assistance and arms sales to developing countries; ROKDA, 11727, 북한·아프리카 관계, 1978. 전2권 (V.2 남동아프리카); NAUK, FCO 21/2866, Relations between North and South Korea and sub-Saharan African countries; NAUK, FCO 21/4953, Relations between North Korea and other countries; United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[43] Andrea Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era.*

[44] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2010/571, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009)."

[45] Ibid.

[46] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2012/422, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 1985 (2011)," United Nations Security Council, June 14, 2012, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/NKorea%20S%202012%20422.pdf.

[47] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2015/131, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2141 (2014)."

[48] Ibid.

[49] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[50] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2016/157, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2207 (2015)."

[51] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)"; United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2018/171, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2345 (2017)"; United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2019/171, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2407 (2018)."

[52] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[53] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2018/171, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2345 (2017)."

[54] Ibid.

[55] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2014/147, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2094 (2013)."

[56] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2016/157, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2207 (2015)."

[57] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[58] King Mallory, "North Korean Sanctions Evasion Techniques."

[59] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2015/131, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2141 (2014)."

[60] Annie DuPre, Nicolas Kasprzyk, and Noël Stott, "Cooperation between African States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

[61] Julian Rademeyer, "Beyond Borders: Crime, Conservation and Criminal Networks on the Illicit Rhino Horn Trade" (Geneva: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2016), 23-27.

[62] Julian Rademeyer, "Diplomats and Deceit: North Korea's Criminal Activities in Africa."

[63] NAUK, FCO 21/412, Bilateral relations of North Korea: K.L. Smith to D. Broomfield, December 11, 1989.

[64] Daniel Salisbury, "Spies, Diplomats and Deceit: Exploring the Persistent Role of Diplomatic Missions in North Korea's WMD Proliferation and Arms Trafficking Networks," *Asian Security* 17, no. 3 (September 2, 2021): 313-330, https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2021.1942848.

[65] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2015/131, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2141 (2014)."

[66] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[67] Tycho van der Hoog, "Uncovering North Korean Forced Labour in Africa: Towards a Research Framework," in *People for Profit: North Korean Forced Labour on a Global Scale*, eds. Remco Breuker and Imke van Gardingen (Leiden: LeidenAsiaCentre, 2018), 67-83.

[68] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[69] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2020/151, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2464 (2019)," United Nations Security Council, March 2, 2020, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/060/67/PDF/N2006067.pdf?OpenElement.

[70] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2017/150, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2276 (2016)."

[71] Julian Rademeyer, "Diplomats and Deceit: North Korea's Criminal Activities in Africa."

[72] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2021/211, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2515 (2020)," United Nations Security Council, March 4, 2021, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/034/37/PDF/N2103437.pdf?OpenElement.

[73] "Artful Dodgers: New Findings on North Korean Sanctions - Busting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, " The Sentry, January 2021, https://thesentry.org/reports/artful-dodgers/.

[74] "North Korea: Covid Outbreak a Great Disaster, Says Kim Jong-Un," BBC News, May 14, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-61446907.

[75] Human Rights Council, "Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," United Nations General Assembly, February 7, 2014, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/108/66/PDF/G1410866.pdf?OpenElement.

[76] Eric J. Ballbach, "Moving beyond Targeted Sanctions: The Sanctions Regime of the European Union against North Korea," Research Report (SWP Research Paper, 2022), https://doi.org/10.18449/2022RP04.

[77] Andrea Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era.*

[78] Virginie Grzelczyk, "From Balancing to Bandwagoning: Evaluating the Impact of the Sanction Regime on North Korea-Africa Relationships," *North Korean Review* 15, no. 1 (2019): 23.

[79] Interview with a defected North Korean diplomat.

[80] Andrea Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era.*

[81] Min Chao Choy, "Poachers, guns and statues: North Korea's 'hub' of crime in South Africa," NK News, May 5, 2021, https://www.nknews.org/pro/poachers-guns-and-statues-north-koreas-hub-of-crime-in-south-africa/.

[82] United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2014/147, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2094 (2013)."

KEI Promoting Dialogue and Understanding Between Korea and the United States | 1800 K St. NW, Suite 300 | Washington, DC 20006
T.202.464.1982 | F.202.464.1987 | www.keia.org