



NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR THREAT TO UNITED STATES SECURITY DURING THE LEADERSHIP OF DONALD TRUMP

Danial Darwis

International Relations Study Program, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Cenderawasih University

E-mail: danial.darwis@gmail.com

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Correspondent

Danial Darwis

danial.darwis@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to look at the North Korean nuclear threat to the security of the United States during the presidency of the United States President Donald Trump by using the Security Dilemma, which is one of the concepts in realism theory that arises as a result of a country's actions to improve its country's security. Still, on the one hand, it creates a reaction. Other countries also want to improve their security, which will lead to a decrease in safety in the first country. In addition, the author also uses Balance of Power which underlies his view that every government or alliance of countries that feel threatened by increasing the military power of a country or a coalition of other countries will respond by increasing the strength of their country as a balancing effort. North Korea is again in the global spotlight for developing its nuclear program. This has created a reaction in the form of a security threat to the United States, so under the leadership of Donald Trump, various efforts have been made to offset this. This paper finds the results that the U.S. security dilemma is based on fear and threats due to the increasing power of North Korea. U.S. President Donald Trump tries to stop this by carrying out a Balance of Power. The forms of activity by Donald Trump include trying to combine diplomatic and sanctions with extreme measures in cutting economic resources, stopping food supplies, and diplomacy of isolation. Using military instruments to force Pyongyang to halt its nuclear weapons development program is also possible.

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INTRODUCTION

North Korea is in the world's spotlight for developing its nuclear program. The development of atomic weapons is a significant issue for regional security stability. This has been happening since the cold war era. The United States, as an influential country in global geopolitics and geostrategy, is expected to implement policies that maintain security stability in the East Asia region. In line with the changes that have continued to occur under Trump's leadership, the Korean Peninsula is still receiving attention from the United States, considering that in that region, there is North Korea which is still continuously developing nuclear weapons which directly threaten the security interests of the United States in the East Asia Region. This certainly presents a challenge for President Donald Trump in playing its role as a superpower that influences the East Asia region. On the one hand, South Korea has developed capacities, increased military capabilities, and enabled active cooperation with the United States to safeguard each country's security interests in the East Asia region. On the other hand, the North Korean authoritarian regime has expanded its nuclear capabilities by continuing to develop long-range missiles and has directly threatened the interests of the United States in the East Asia region (Pritchard & Tilelli, Jr., 2010).

In 2013, Kim Jong Un, the new leader of North Korea, conducted his first nuclear test as North Korean leader and was North Korea's third nuclear test. The test was much larger than previous tests, with experts estimating that the nuke had a bomb yield of between six and seven kilotons. In response, the United States transferred some missile defence equipment and a nuclear-capable stealth bomber to South Korea. At that time, the United States government could have taken more challenging steps, such as a naval blockade to block all shipments to North Korea. Meanwhile, Secretary of State John F. Kerry warned that North Korea would lose if there were a military conflict with the United States (Erickson, 2017). Finding a way to solve North Korea's nuclear problem is not easy. The long debate to stop North Korea's nuclear program has been carried out to stabilize the Korean Peninsula's security. Seeing the security crisis caused by North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, Trump wisely switched to a more rational approach, namely the "Maximum Pressure and Engagement" strategy. This strategy combines diplomatic rhetoric, increased sanctions, and negotiations (Syahrin, 2018).

This paper wants to explain how changes in the direction of the United States security policy towards North Korea's nuclear program during Donald Trump's leadership. The author argues that there is often uncertainty in the security relationship between North Korea and the United States. In recent times, there has been an increase in security tensions which has created critical conditions and indicated the possibility of a war in the East Asia Region due to North Korea's development of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, North Korea, on different occasions, was convinced that North Korea developed nuclear only to want security guarantees from possible attacks by the United States and its alliance countries in East Asia.

To make it easier to explain North Korea's nuclear threat to the security of the United States, the author uses the Security Dilemma concept as the main frame of mind. This concept is derived from the realist paradigm. A security Dilemma can be defined as a phenomenon of action and reaction between several countries. Efforts by a government to improve its security will result in or be considered as weakening the

safety of other countries (Jervis, 1994). Robert Jervis said that every country tries to obtain and improve security status by increasing its military capabilities. Increasing military capability in a country is a matter that must be done considering that the goal is clear, a government must protect its national and state interests. In the realist assumption, the reality of international politics is that countries are faced with a global system that is anarchy. The anarchy system in a realist context is a condition in which there is no supreme authority as a centre of power so that countries mutually increase their capability to fulfil their domestic interests and improve their security. As a result, every country has xenophobic instincts in responding to rapidly changing international phenomena and the tendency to increase power by each country (Branislav, 2005). From the explanation of the theory above, it can be seen that the impact of North Korea's nuclear weapons is the emergence of a state of security dilemma for the United States who feel threatened and suspicious of each other, meaning that when North Korea takes action by producing nuclear weapons, what happens is there is a reaction from the United States to take action. The same thing, namely making atomic weapons or strengthening its military defence system to anticipate attacks from North Korea.

The following analytical tool used by the author to help explain North Korea's nuclear threat to the security of the United States is the Balance of Power. The primary postulation of Balance of power is that every country or alliance of countries that feel threatened by an increase in the military might of a government or a coalition of other countries will respond by increasing the strength of their country as a balancing effort. The national power of a nation can be measured by the geographical size of the region, the population it has, and the level of technological progress of a country or an alliance of forces (Interdisciplinary, 2009). By using Balance Of Power as a framework for thinking, an increase in the military power of a country that is used aggressively will be responded to by countries that feel threatened. Departing from this thinking, every country that feels threatened will react by increasing its military strength or forming an alliance. (Balancing). Through its nuclear program, North Korea is confident that it will be able to secure its regime in power and reduce the hegemonic influence of the United States on it in the region.

North Korea has been facing economic sanctions from the United States Government, has been alienated from the dynamics of international politics, and has experienced difficulties integrating with the international community. Apart from various reactions from the international community, for North Korea, this nuclear test is a form of international diplomacy to voice North Korea's national interests so that the international community can hear them. The failures experienced by the United States and North Korea in several agreements regarding North Korea's nuclear program made the United States feel compelled to apply different diplomatic means toward Pyongyang. The changing attitudes and behaviour of the North Korean state towards the U.S. require the U.S. to implement policies that can adjust North Korea's behaviour. Based on these considerations, the United States implemented a Strategic Patience Approach to foreign policy toward North Korea (Riezky, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODS

The method that the authors use in this study is a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The data sources that the authors use are secondary data

sources obtained from books, online news, journals, and other written sources. The technique used in collecting data is literature study because the writer does not interact directly with the research object but only through other literary and written sources. Then, the collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which include data processing, data analysis, data interpretation, and drawing conclusions, which are expected to answer the problems in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

North Korea's threat to attack the United States military base in Guam using its nuclear weapons has prompted the United States to urge the United Nations to issue sanctions against North Korea. North Korea did this because they claimed the United States carried out nuclear war exercises to eliminate the North Korean leader and occupy Pyongyang.

North Korean Nuclear Development

North Korea's nuclear program dates back to the Cold War. Nuclear development started in the 1950s. In cooperation with the Soviet Union, North Korea built atomic facilities and increased its mastery of nuclear technology. For the first time, North Korea conducted an atomic detonation test in October 2006. The existence of a military alliance policy between the United States and South Korea toward North Korea has always been tinged with suspicion and distrust. North Korea seeks to defend itself from external threats by developing nuclear weapons. However, North Korea's development of atomic weapons has only made the East Asian regional security situation even more complex. Two primary arguments exist for North Korea's motives for developing nuclear weapons. The first argument, 'doves,' reveals that North Korea's threat from a military, political, and economic perspective keeps North Korea adamant in maintaining its nuclear weapons development. North Korea uses the story of atomic weapons to attract sympathy from other countries against the United States through cooperation and economic assistance.

The second argument, 'Hawks,' emphasizes that psychological, domestic political incentives and revisionist motives are the main drivers for the country's development of nuclear weapons. This argument relates to the Juche ideology adopted by North Korea. This ideology states that the government itself determines a nation's destiny. Therefore, North Korea tends to want to change the situation by developing nuclear weapons in the country. Suppose the conflict between America and North Korea continues. In that case, it is estimated that tensions between countries in the East Asia region will continue to occur, which could trigger a nuclear war. This is because this involves the two countries and other countries around them (Ardiani, 2020).

North Korea's Nuclear Test

On January 6, 2016, North Korea conducted a nuclear test by detonating a hydrogen bomb. North Korea's nuclear capabilities based on several tests are as follows:

Table 1. North Korea's Nuclear Test Capability

Trial Date	Yield (Kilotons)
October 9, 2006	0.5 - 1
May 25, 2009	2 - 3
February 12, 2013	6 - 7
January 6, 2016	6 - 7
September 9, 2016	11 - 12

Source: Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization, U.S. Geological Survey, and others. (2017)

The nuclear test is interpreted as a tool to strengthen North Korea's position in the international system. It also deals with the isolation of economic and political involvement due to the Korean War. Under Kim Jon Un's leadership, North Korea has intensified its efforts to carry out nuclear weapons tests which have drawn international community attention and efforts to stop them. North Korea also took advantage of this opportunity to gain more benefits and strength in its position (Ardiani, 2020).

A Threat to the Security of the United States

North Korea's nuclear weapons capability directly threatens the United States. According to the author's argument, the impact of North Korea's atomic security stability in the East Asia Region is the involvement of the United States in building alliances and military cooperation with countries in the East Asia Region to dispel North Korea's nuclear power. The countries that are partners of the United States include South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. In September 2018, the United States, through President Trump, demonstrated an increasingly firm response to North Korea's move to develop its nuclear program and test nuclear weapons. Previously, the United States asked all U.N. member states to cut all economic ties with North Korea. Not only has the United States imposed economic sanctions on North Korea, but the United States has threatened any country that does business with North Korea. Donald Trump announced on his Twitter account that the United States would end all trade with any nation cooperating with North Korea. The statement issued by the United States refers to North Korea's hydrogen bomb test activity on September 3, 2018, which predicts that the hydrogen bomb can be used as a warhead that can be inserted into North Korea's ballistic missile (ICBM) (Yoga, Nanda, & Trisni, 2020). North Korea's development of nuclear weapons harms the economic interests of countries such as the United States, Japan, and South Korea. This is because many business actors cancel their investments in the East Asia region for security reasons (Purwono & Zuhri, 2010).

North Korea believes that the United States has thwarted Kim II Sung's efforts to unite South Korea and North Korea through military aggression during the Korean War. In addition, during the Korean War, North Korea was a party that always experienced political and military pressure from the United States due to unequal military capabilities between North Korea and the United States (Hartati, 2013). Therefore, the use of nuclear as a national security strategy is the underlying reason for North Korea considering the historical factors which illustrate the threat and domination of the United States. The main objective of North Korea's strategic policy towards the United States is to prevent threats posed by the defence alliance relationship between

the United States and South Korea. This alliance will indirectly strengthen the South Korean military, which is dangerous for North Korea.

United States Policy

For more than 25 years, U.S. security policy and diplomatic approaches have failed to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear program. For decades, the United States has always sought a deal with the North Korean regime to safeguard its regional interests. During the administration of Bill Clinton, the United States tried to persuade North Korea on October 21, 1994, with the Geneva Agreed Framework but was unsuccessful. This agreement states that North Korea will decommission its nuclear reactor; consequently, the United States and South Korea will guarantee energy needs and provide fuel oil for North Korea. The Bush administration then took a different approach, which is generally difficult to replicate. It was to apply intense pressure on North Korea and classify it as part of the "axis of evil." Besides that, since 2003, during the reign of George W. Bush, the United States has also been actively involved in the Six-Party Talks, which also failed to produce effective results in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (Syahrin, 2018).

The United States can use diplomacy and military options in dealing with North Korea. If a diplomatic instrument is chosen, two difficulties will arise. First, regarding the format of the negotiations, the United States and North Korea have yet to agree on whether the talks are bilateral, multilateral, or regional. Second, regarding the substance of the negotiations, they have different views on whether the discussions are comprehensive or partial. The United States wants North Korea's development of nuclear weapons to be verified and agreed upon through multilateral negotiations. In return, the United States and its allies are willing to provide economic assistance. The United States urged North Korea to give up its nuclear program and only then was it granted economic concessions. This pattern was implemented during the Clinton administration but was challenging to implement effectively due to the lack of solid trust between the United States and North Korea.

The long debate to stop North Korea's nuclear program has been carried out to stabilize the Korean Peninsula's security. President Donald Trump has five strategic options to stop North Korea's nuclear program. **First**, Trump is only passive, following the strategy of the previous President of the United States and only waiting for North Korea's response to the denuclearization agreement. Given the ongoing crisis surrounding North Korea's nuclear ambitions, that option doesn't look promising to the United States. Contrary to the predictions of many observers. **Second**, the United States represses through repressive actions through pressure on the North Korean regime in non-military ways, primarily through sanctions, coercion, and isolationist policies aimed at influencing North Korea more than ever. **Third**, encourage China to exert economic and political pressure on North Korea. Trump said the United States should continue to pressure China to use its financial grip over North Korea as leverage to resolve the nuclear issue. North Korea's economic dependence on China may be the key to the nuclear issue. The Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations also understand this condition and are trying to make Beijing continue to play a more active role in the North Korean nuclear case. **Fourth**, the United States can prevent the North Korean regime from developing nuclear weapons using military means. This approach uses direct threats and seeks

to replace the North Korean government. Donald Trump has repeatedly cited military action against the North Korean regime and its nuclear weapons program as a viable scenario for the United States. **Fifth** is an attempt to negotiate directly with Pyongyang. Trump announced his intention not to repeat the strategy of previous presidents of the United States. Trump says he will persuade North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to abandon his nuclear program. If North Korea is to return to the negotiating table and make mutual concessions, the United States must overcome the North Korean government's current security deficit. One way to do this is to comply with Pyongyang's demand for a mutually enforceable peace agreement on the Korean Peninsula (Syahrin, 2018).

Before the era of Donald Trump's leadership, the previous President of the United States implemented the five approaches above. During the Clinton-Bush-Obama era, the U.S. strategy and approach to North Korea were partial. In other words, policies between one policy and another are contradictory and inconsistent. Thus, these strategies must support each other to achieve effective results (Syahrin, 2018).

CONCLUSION

North Korea is in the world's spotlight because of its nuclear development. Although initially intended for peaceful purposes (generating electric power), the capabilities of North Korea's nuclear facilities can easily be changed for military purposes (producing atomic bombs) to defend against outside threats. However, in reality, North Korea's nuclear development has threatened countries in the East Asian region, including the United States. Economically, North Korea is facing deteriorating economic conditions. North Korea's economic recovery option, like other communist bloc countries, is to establish diplomatic relations with Western countries. However, this choice is hampered by the country's nuclear weapons development program. For the first time, North Korea conducted a nuclear detonation test in October 2006. Nuclear development is a rational choice to strengthen the bargaining position to obtain the needed political-economic compensation. The United States feels threatened by North Korea's nuclear development because many countries have cancelled their cooperation with the United States for security reasons. This makes the United States economy decline. If North Korea continues to carry out its nuclear tests, more casualties will occur.

The United States has urged the United Nations to impose strict sanctions on North Korea if it continues to carry out its nuclear tests. The United States began to experience a security dilemma due to North Korea's nuclear development, so it began to produce its atomic weapons to anticipate attacks from North Korea. For 25 years, the United States failed to persuade North Korea to stop its nuclear tests. During the administration of Bill Clinton, the United States, on October 21, 1994, tried to convince North Korea with the Geneva Agreed Framework but to no avail. President Bush used the Soft Power strategy, and President Obama used the Smart Power policy. Trump seeks to combine diplomatic solutions and sanctions with extreme measures in cutting economic resources, food supplies, and diplomacy of isolation. Using military instruments to force Pyongyang to stop its nuclear weapons development program is also possible. If the approach taken by the United States under Trump is no different and better than what has been implemented so far, then we can be sure that there are two realistic possibilities. North Korea becomes a country with a stable

nuclear weapons capability, or a large-scale conventional war occurs on the Korean Peninsula. The United States must ensure that economic relations with other countries work well. Meanwhile, North Korea's nuclear problem has made America have difficulties continuing economic ties, especially with countries assisting North Korea. For this reason, the United States is trying to maintain favourable trade interests with the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

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