



Analysis of the United States' Foreign Policy Towards Denuclearization of North Korea's Nuclear 2017-2021

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Abstract

Since few decades ago, the United States has faced a real threat from one of Soviet Union allies, North Korea. North Korea has built a nuclear facility and the government keeps develop it day by day. To solve the problem, the United States under Trump administration suggested an approach called Maximum Pressure. However, Maximum Pressure could not contain the power and threat that came from North Korea nuclear. The fact is, North Korea still develops it until now and abandons all of the sanctions given by the United States and its allies.

Keywords: *Trump, North Korea, Nuclear, China, Sanctions*

1. Introduction

The United States is known as a superpower that plays an important role in the world of international politics. This is evidenced by the various United States political policies that have been in the spotlight as well as having a direct or indirect impact on the global order. The United States has great power to smooth all its national interests through its important role in the United Nations Security Council. Likewise with the issue that has always been a hot topic for discussion, namely the issue of North Korea's nuclear development.

North Korea is a country located in East Asia, which is directly adjacent to China, Russia, and South Korea. North Korea is focusing its attention on restarting nuclear reactors to protect the country in case the United States attacks. This development was carried out because North Korea felt threatened and insecure about the situation around



it. On that basis, North Korea considers the development and possession of nuclear weapons still an option open to several countries, both because of military, political and economic considerations.

North Korea's nuclear weapons development program is considered capable of threatening the peace and stability of international security, making the United States feel obliged to denuclearize North Korea. This is related to the interests of the United States in maintaining the world's nuclear proliferation. The challenges posed by North Korea's nuclear development efforts have global, regional and bilateral dimensions. An internationally coordinated response must take all aspects of this challenge into account.

Given the high level of mistrust between the United States and North Korea, the United States will not be able to change the situation on its own. Cooperation is needed from partners in Asia who have confirmed their support—through the Joint Statement through the Six Party Talks in 2005—for the goal of denuclearization. The United States, China, Russia, South Korea, Japan and North Korea have all signed this statement. North Korea agreed to close its nuclear facilities in exchange for fuel aid and stepped toward normalizing relations with the United States and Japan.

Six Party Talks is a meeting held between six countries on the issue of North Korea's nuclear program. These talks were the result of North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003. The real results of the Six Party Talks were only seen when they had held five meetings. Even so, three rounds of talks from yielding little progress (Letian, 2007). In the third to fifth round of talks, then this meeting produced something. North Korea agreed to close its nuclear facilities in exchange for fuel aid and stepped toward normalizing relations with the United States and Japan (Scanlon, 2007).

However, the United States and its partners have different interests and priorities regarding this North Korean challenge. China is more focused on the regional dimension and prioritizes stability. South Korea and Russia support denuclearization but want to achieve that goal by peaceful means. For Japan, the issue of how to deal with Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea in the 1970s has become a higher priority than



denuclearization. For the United States itself, he is more focused and deeply concerned about the global implications of Korea's nuclear program, the consequences for the global non-proliferation regime, and the potential spread of weapons, materials, and know-how to troubled states, terrorist groups, or others—especially in the Middle East.

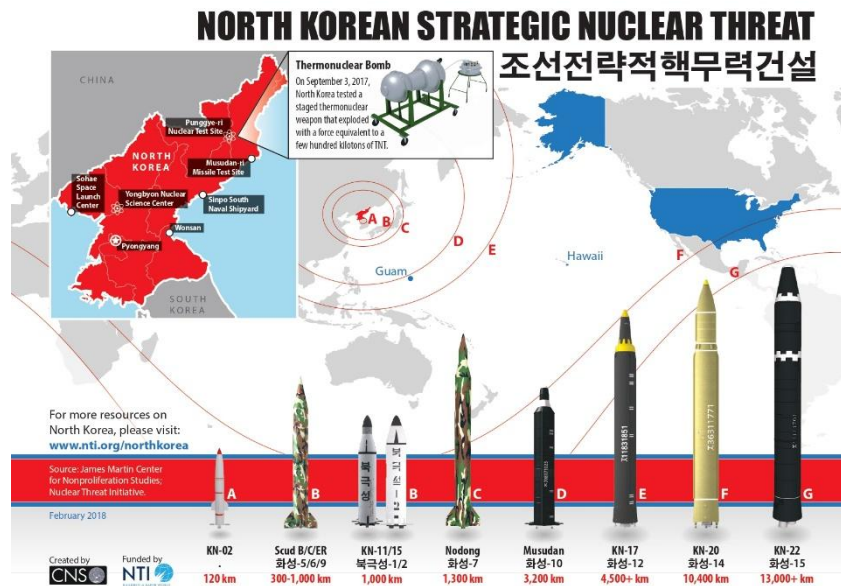
These different approaches and priorities have been in the spotlight and have gradually diminished as they correspond to the political realities of the sinking of the North Korean ship and the shelling of the Yonpyeong Island in South Korea in March and November 2010 (Snyder, 2010).

On February 12, 2013, North Korean media announced that the country had conducted an underground nuclear test, its third in seven years. The earthquake generated by the test was tracked by the *China Earthquake Networks Center*, the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission*, and the *United States Geological Survey*, and was recorded at 4.9 (which was later changed to 5.1) on the Richter scale. In response, Japan called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations and South Korea to raise military alert status (Thunborg, 2013).

North Korea then carried out its fourth and fifth nuclear detonations on January 06 and September 09, 2016 at the Punggye-ri nuclear site about 50 kilo meter northwest of Kilju City. North Korean media made an announcement that Kim Jong Un's regime had successfully tested a hydrogen bomb. However, third-party scientists as well as officials and institutions in South Korea doubt North Korea's claims and argue that such devices are more suitable for use in fission bombs such as fission thrusters. The weapon uses hydrogen fusion to produce less explosive power, the warhead is more suitable for arming weapons delivery devices such as missiles, not for achieving the destructive power of an actual hydrogen bomb (BBC, 2017).

The latest nuclear test that North Korea had been tried was on September 03, 2017. North Korea claimed it has successfully tested what the world has worried about, a miniaturised hydrogen bomb that could be loaded on to a long-range missile. Seismic readings of 6.3 indicated the test was bigger than any other that has been conducted. Some early estimates said that the test came in at about 100-150 kilo tones, potentially 10

times larger than last time. North Korean state media called it a "perfect success" and a "very meaningful step in completing the national nuclear weapons programme" (BBC,



2017).

Source: nti.org

During the two terms of Barack Obama's administration, he made a special policy to deal with North Korea's nuclear case with the term "*Strategic Patience*" which was also used as a way to respond to provocations made by North Korea. In dealing with this act of provocation, the Obama administration formulated a policy which was described by the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, as "*strategic patience in close coordination with our Six Party Allies.*" (VOA, 2009).

Strategic Patience itself is a policy issued by the Obama administration, which contains that the United States will not engage in anything with North Korea until the country shows positive, constructive behaviour, and a sincere desire to negotiate (Rinehart, 2011). This commitment relates to existing sanctions and sanctions created by the Proliferation Security Initiative founded in the George W. Bush era. Many parties support this policy and assert that this new policy maintains the United States to shape the negotiating environment (Rinehart, 2011).



But when Donald Trump got his triumphant on 2016 election, he made a reckless statement toward North Korea and seemed to ruin the tension in Korean Peninsula. Trump vowed to rain down “fire and fury” on North Korea if it posed a threat to the United States. In the fall, he went before the United Nations General Assembly to warn that he would “totally destroy North Korea” if the United States were forced to defend itself or its allies. Trump also raised the prospect of nuclear war with North Korea, bragging in flashy playground terms Tuesday night that he ordered an arsenal of destruction “much bigger” and “more powerful” than any foreign government in Asia. Trump's aggressive response to remarks made the day before by Kim raised the temperature in the confrontation between the United States and North Korea even as America's allies in South Korea moved to open talks with Pyongyang. The contrast between Trump's language and the peace offer by South Korea highlights the growing rift between the two long-time allies (Baker & Tackett, 2018).

Trump has emphasized a more militant line, arguing that his predecessors were too lenient in responding to the threat. He has stepped up American sanctions and lobbied the United Nations for increased punitive measures as well. While at various points in the past he has suggested that he would be open to negotiations, he has emphasized more often these days that he does not believe the talks will lead to fruitful results.

On the other hand, China is also frustrated with the prospects for cooperation with the United States due to deteriorating bilateral relations. China believes that the United States is unwilling to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, and is thus prepared to tolerate the DPRK threat in order to build its alliance against China. Washington, on the other hand, believes Beijing is unwilling to discuss the nuclear issue because it uses Pyongyang as leverage against America and its allies. Because of these differing views, coupled with mutual suspicion of each other's intentions, China and the United States lack the impetus to make real progress in cooperation (Thornton, Nan, & Lee, 2021).



2. Literature Review

2.1. On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War (Written By: Van Jackson)

This book shows how the nuclear crisis that emerged in 2017 was the result of several powers meeting over time: the gradual narrowing and hardening of US policy toward North Korea; Kim Jong Un's determination to secure a viable nuclear deterrent against the United States no matter the cost; and a US president with a penchant for personal insults and making unprepared threats. This overlapping power creates several realistic paths to the unthinkable: nuclear war with North Korea. There would be no foreseeable exit from the conflict were it not for a series of divergent lucky convergences: North Korea demonstrated the technical ability to fire missiles that could reach anywhere in the United States by the end of 2017; Kim Jong Un's willingness to prioritize economic development after securing a viable nuclear deterrent; Host of the South Korean Winter Olympics in March 2018; South Korea's dovish progressive presidential snap election as the crisis arose; and Trump's fondness for the splendour and circumstances of meetings with foreign heads of state, combined with his unique attitude to calls from South Korea and China for restraint and diplomacy.

2.2. Entering the New Era of Deterrence: North Korea and Nuclear Weapons (Written By: Sung Chull Kim and Michael D. Cohen)

In this book, the writers address the difficulties of establishing a stable deterrence on the Korean Peninsula, the ways in which the North Korean nuclear issue has complicated the US-China rivalry and regional dynamics, the repercussions for the nonproliferation regime, and other policy implications. North Korea's nuclear challenge is second only to China's assertive policies in the South China Sea as the most important driver of tension and conflict between countries in Asia today. But as a contribution that follows the show, it is less well understood. Pyongyang's nuclear success and trajectory requires a new



mind-set for thinking about how we can deal with North Korea in the twenty-first century.

3. Research Methodology

Qualitative research method is research on descriptive research and tends to use analysis. Process and meaning (subject perspective) are more highlighted in qualitative research. The theoretical basis is used as a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts on the ground. In addition, this theoretical basis is also useful for providing an overview of the research background and as a material for discussing research results. There is a fundamental difference between the role of theoretical foundations in quantitative research and qualitative research. In quantitative research, research departs from theory to data, and ends in acceptance or rejection of the theory used; while in qualitative research the researcher starts from the data, uses existing theories as explanatory material, and ends with a "theory".

Kriyantono stated that "qualitative research aims to explain the phenomenon as deeply as possible through in-depth data collection". Qualitative research emphasizes the depth of data obtained by researchers. The deeper and more detailed the data obtained, the better the quality of this qualitative research. In contrast to quantitative, the objects in qualitative research are generally limited in number.

In addition, the results of this study are subjective so they cannot be generalized. In general, qualitative research is conducted by using interview and observation methods. Through this method, researchers will analyse the data obtained from the field in detail. Researchers cannot research the social conditions being observed, because the whole reality that occurs is a unity that occurs naturally. The results of qualitative research can also lead to new theories or concepts if the results of the research contradict the theories and concepts that were previously used as research studies (Kriyantono, 2006).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Trump, China, and Sanctions



A difficulty for the transition team, Obama's and Trump's, is the limited number of candidates available and qualified for senior government positions. Most Republican foreign policy talent has been blacklisted from the Trump administration for signing the #NeverTrump letter emphatically rejecting his candidacy, and some members of the transition team have no political or foreign policy experience (Jackson, 2019). The late start of the transition team, his inner turmoil, and his lack of experience with politics and policy all combined to make the identification of the shortlisted candidate for the position an urgent priority, but one that took longer than usual. Neither North Korea nor foreign policy, in general, are of immediate concern to Trump's transition team.

After the inauguration, Trump spread a term which called "Maximum Pressure" for two nuclear problems, one of them is North Korea's nuclear. Maximum Pressure strategy rested on the foundation of sustained pressure and military strength to support diplomacy (Maxwell, 2019). Pressure and deterrence were essential to the success of working level negotiations. Ultimately, however, the choice about North Korea's future belonged to Kim. He could make the strategic decision to denuclearize (which also entails putting an end to his chemical, biological, and missile programs). If Kim made the wrong choice, then Maximum Pressure would weaken the north, and bring Korea one step closer to unification and a United Republic of Korea.

It is also said that Maximum Pressure is "Strategic Patience with Loaded Guns". But this statement was declined by the Republican administration. A further indication of Trump's administration's forthcoming policies reinforced the public perception that the United States was actively considering the use of deterrence force against Pyongyang, was Tillerson's declaration during his visit in Seoul that "The policy of strategic patience has ended." (Song, 2017).

Even before his arrival in South Korea, Tillerson signalled the Trump administration was preparing to harden its approach to North Korea. In a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida, Mr Tillerson criticised "20 years of a failed approach" to Pyongyang. A pre-emptive strike against Pyongyang has rarely been discussed during previous US administrations because of North Korea's ability to easily



attack Seoul. Tillerson criticised Beijing for the retaliation and urged China to pile more pressure on Pyongyang to rein in Mr Kim's regime. Beijing has put pressure on South Korean companies that have business interests in China and banned Chinese tour groups to South Korea (Song, 2017).

When we talk about North Korea's nuclear, we cannot leave the sanctions behind. The United States and the United Nations several times had given sanctions to Pyongyang due to refusal to denuclearization. The United States has imposed unilateral sanctions on North Korea that restrict more economic activities and target a larger list of individuals and businesses than the UN sanctions. They are primarily designed to impede Pyongyang's development of missile and nuclear technology, but some have come in response to North Korean cyber-attacks, such as its 2014 breach of Sony's computer systems and 2017 WannaCry ransom-ware attack; human rights violations; censorship; and money laundering, among other activities. Additionally, the United States has sanctioned banks, companies, and individuals outside North Korea—particularly in China and Russia—for supporting its weapons program. It has also fined companies for violating U.S. export controls (Eleanor, 2019).

On several occasions, the United States has partially lifted its sanctions on North Korea in exchange for a promise to freeze its nuclear program and dismantle parts of its facilities. However, Pyongyang has consistently reneged on its pledges.

During his first year in office, Trump authorized the Treasury Department to block from the US financial system any foreign business or individual that facilitates trade with North Korea as part of the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign. "Foreign financial institutions are now realizing that going forward, they can choose to do business with the United States or with North Korea, but not both," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. Analysts say the stepped-up measures are designed to counter sanctions evasion tactics and push Kim back to the negotiating table. In 2018, Kim agreed to a summit with South Korea and the United States (Eleanor, 2019).

Not only the United States and United Nations, several countries had given sanctions to North Korea too. For example, the United States allies Japan and South Korea, and as



well as European Union. These three had also sanctioned North Korea beyond the measures imposed by the UN Security Council.

Then, what about China's response due to North Korea's economic sanctions? As far as I understand, China sees the threat of North Korean nuclear missiles as a means to dissolve the US-South Korea alliance, thereby creating reunification of Korea under the authoritarian North Korean regime. It's also true that some elements of the military in China lament the day they helped create this North Korean Frankenstein. These same elements see the possibility that in response to the North Korean threat, Japan and South Korea could decide to build their own nuclear arsenal, which is completely unacceptable to China.

The US understands that while China has critical influence over the North, it is unwilling to use it. China wants to maintain North Korea's newfound nuclear power while easing aspirations for its nuclear-armed neighbours South Korea and Japan (Huessy, 2017).

4.2. Discussion

If we look closer into individual level analysis, we might see that policy making with this level of analysis is strongly influenced by emotional, psychological, and even biological factors. This is sometimes what makes a state's decision to step up look irrational. Take a look at how Trump's response through his tweets. Many experts said that he looked like a whining child seek for help. Trump's mental unpreparedness can also be seen from the way he responds to criticism and innuendo from the opposition party. This makes the image of the United States become quite bad in the international eyes, because it has an emotionally unstable head of state.

Second, we can look at the level of country analysis. At this level of analysis, the explanation of state behaviour is determined by the internal factors of the state. According to Rourke, what is needed by a researcher who uses the state level of analysis as a reference material is an understanding of how actors (bureaucrats, interest groups



and legislative bodies) within the state play a role in foreign policy making (Rourke, 2008).

Trump came from the Grand Old Party or the Republican Party. Usually, this party is identified as a very classic, conservative, and right-wing party. One feature that is quite prominent and distinguishes the Republican Party from the Democratic Party is the point of view of the use of military force. They believe that military power is needed to create a very strong defense. It also underlies Trump's policies when he took office. Trump did not hesitate to deploy his military forces if he and his members feel an issue can pose a threat to the United States and its allies.

Let's talk about this nuclear thing once again. This question might be very basic but essential, that is "why economic sanctions on North Korea fail to work?" This statement might leave us hanging but I just want to try to point out my point of view. Firstly, it is simply just because the United States aimed the wrong target. Indeed, limited access to relevant materials, weapons, and technology is a challenge to North Korea's nuclear plans. However, as long as Pyongyang has sufficient government revenue, it can continue to support asset transfers related to physical and non-physical programs. This can be done through underground economic networks such as black markets and smuggling, which are rampant in the era of globalization and are difficult to regulate.

Some foreign policy experts say UN sanctions on North Korea are likely to be made easier to gain support from China and Russia, which as permanent members of the UN Security Council, have veto power. Both countries fear the possible outcome of regime change in Pyongyang.

Besides, tougher sanctions could have the opposite of their intended effect, spurring North Korea to pursue nuclear advancement with greater insurgency. Kim Jong-un has already conducted more missile and nuclear tests since he took power in 2012 than his father and grandfather combined. Kim could interpret more sanctions as a threat to his regime's survival, motivating him to take more belligerent actions, such as attacking U.S. or South Korean targets. The economic squeeze of sanctions did not stop Kim from



declaring in his 2018 new year's address that the country has "completed" its nuclear force.

Then, what kind of business that need to be done with China? China is an important player in North Korea's denuclearization efforts and should be encouraged to play a constructive role. Because of Beijing's oversized economic ties with Pyongyang, its cooperation, or lack of cooperation, in sanctions enforcement is critical to the effectiveness of economic pressure. In addition, the North Korean leadership consults regularly with China and seeks its support in negotiations with Washington, even as it seeks to play tricks on Washington and Beijing. China's ability to protect Pyongyang from economic and political pressure makes Beijing an important factor in efforts to influence North Korea. The United States should work with China to ensure that Beijing uses this leverage constructively, recognizing that Washington and Beijing will never be key moves.

Given the high level of mistrust between the United States and North Korea, Pyongyang is unlikely to agree to an all-or-nothing approach that requires immediate and complete denuclearization in exchange for full sanctions relief and other diplomatic concessions. The United States should negotiate based on a step-by-step parallel path process that can build the necessary trust for reciprocal action toward denuclearization and a peace regime. This approach is the most practical way to achieve progress toward US national security goals.

The United States should work with China as well as regional allies to implement a coordinated approach to this process. China can be very helpful by clearly signaling to Pyongyang that the cost of becoming a de facto nuclear power will continue with severe sanctions and international condemnation and that complete denuclearization is, from time to time, the best alternative. Moreover, a roadmap jointly endorsed by Washington and Beijing will send a strong signal to Pyongyang that attempts to exploit differences between them will fail.



5. Kesimpulan

The conclusion of my writing is that the United States has done what it can to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula due to North Korea's nuclear. Even so, all the efforts that have been made by the United States during the leadership of Donald Trump have not yielded results. North Korea continues its nuclear development and gets back up from China. The sanctions that have been given by the United States and its allies also seem trivial. Therefore, until President Obama leaves the White House, Maximum Pressure is considered ineffective to deal with North Korea's nuclear.

6. Thank You Notes

Thank you Prof. Banyu for giving us the opportunity to point out our point of view regarding an international issue. I hope I can be supervised by you while making my thesis and I am truly looking forward to it.

Daftar Pustaka

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