

North Korea's Nuclear Development and Korean Peninsula Security Stability: A Defensive Realism Perspective (2017-2021)

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Abstract

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This research was motivated by North Korea's nuclear development with the aim of maintaining the stability of the country's security from external threats, but North Korea's nuclear development made countries in the Korean Peninsula region such as Japan and South Korea feel threatened, so the two countries also helped develop their military by making alliances to weaken North Korea. Therefore, researchers use the perspective of Defensive Realism to explain the impact of North Korea's nuclear development during Kim Jong Un's reign on the security stability of the Korean Peninsula in the period 2017 to 2021. The methods used are qualitative methods and literature analysis. The results showed that North Korea's nuclear development during the reign of Kim Jong Un had a significant impact on the security stability of the Korean Peninsula. This impact is in the form of increased security threats such as an arms race. Based on the analysis, it can be said that North Korea's nuclear development during the reign of Kim Jong Un has important implications for the security stability of the Korean Peninsula in the long run. Therefore, there needs to be a concerted effort to address this issue and ensure regional security stability.

I. INTRODUCTION

North Korea is a country that has many uniqueness. This country located in East Asia, chooses to isolate itself from the outside world so it is often referred to as The Hermit Kingdom. For years, North Korea has made efforts to develop its nuclear program to keep the country safe. Since September 2017, North Korea has been subject to international sanctions from the UN Security Council over its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programs. The sanctions were imposed by the UN Security Council based on Resolution No. 2375. Despite sanctions and threats from other countries, North Korea is undeterred because its nuclear program is an

effective means of guaranteeing the security of its regime and can also gain influence in negotiations¹.

In 2020-2021 North Korea developed its missile named hypersonic missile. In 2017, the missile was launched for the first time from Jangang province and landed in the ocean between the Korean and Japanese peninsulas. It is estimated that its flight traveled more than 700 kilometers (435 miles) and reached an altitude of 60 kilometers that fell outside the sea of Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Hypersonic missile made by North Korea has a speed above the average of normal missiles, (CNN Indonesia, 2021). North Korea believes that the possession of nuclear weapons is a way to defend itself against major powers and influence the international community. This nuclear weapons development program is certainly not easy, even North Korea is willing to spend a lot of money to finance this program. According to a report by a security research institute in the United States, it is suspected that North Korea also carried out a massive theft of cryptocurrency which is around \$ 400 million or (around Rp 5.7 trillion) so that, in 2019, they managed to raise around \$ 2 billion (around Rp 28.7 trillion) through sophisticated cyber attacks to finance weapons of mass destruction programs. (BBC News Indonesia, 2022). By looking at events like this, Defensive Realism seeks to analyze the impact of nuclear development on North Korea. This perspective can be explained because Realism is one of the main perspectives in International Relations. The perspective of realism has a pessimistic basis in human nature. Man has a tendency to achieve his interests and then defend as hard as possible even by attacking. All means are sought to create ideal conditions as desired.

¹ Lisbel., 'Rudal Hipersonik Korea Utara Dan Ancamannya Terhadap Keamanan Kawasan. Kajian Singkat Terhadap Isu Aktual Dan Strategis', 2021, 7–11.

II. METHODOLOGY

This method uses qualitative methods, literature / narrative and descriptive analysis techniques. which explain by looking at documents as references and describe a problem and analyze. As for data collection techniques, researchers use techniques in collecting documents and articles of previous research sourced from scientific journal books, websites or newspapers relevant to the research topic ². And data analysis techniques used by the author using deductive methods, the author can find out facts, be specific, and draw conclusions from the case. The technique in data collection used in this writing is Library Research, which is data collection by reviewing scientific books, literature, print media and scientific materials written on the internet.

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III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In Kenneth Waltz's book *Theory of International Politics* (1979), states generally try to simply survive and states can guarantee their security by forming alliances that balance each other and choosing a strong military posture, and in this book also explains there are 2 means of a state to gain power and maintain its national security⁴. namely:

1. Internal efforts with increased economics capabilities, increased military force or developing better strategies
2. External efforts by strengthening its alliance or weakening the enemy

By looking at these 2 efforts, the author seeks to analyze the impact given to

² P. D Sugiono, 'Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D.', 2005.

³ P. D Sugiono, 'Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D.', 2005.

⁴ K. Waltz, 'The Origin of War in Neorealist Theory', *Journal of Interdisciplinary*, 1998, 615–28.

North Korea's nuclear development. The 2 impacts of this external and internal based on the point of view of defensive realism are as follows:

Internal Efforts

North Korea continues to develop its nukes amid international condemnation and several sanctions imposed by the United Nations due to several nuclear tests that have caused internal impacts such as economic aspects in the form of export and import bans that make North Korea's exports fall from US \$ 315.97 million to US \$ 266.35 million, while imports from North Korea fell to US \$ 145.82 million from US \$ 288.29 million in 2017. Despite this, North Korea insists on developing and conducting its nuclear tests, even though Kim ignores the impact of sanctions imposed on the United Nations on his country because in essence states will use violence to achieve their goals under anarchy⁵. However, Waltz continued, the ultimate goal of countries is actually not on power but on security, in accordance with the use of nuclear weapons as functional actors used by North Korea related to the security of the military sector from external threats, When the country's military sector feels an external threat, it is the government that protects it, the way of protection can use objects that according to government standards according to the criteria can be of several types nonproliferation weapons such as nuclear weapons possessed by North Korea. So with the country's response that feels there is an external threat, but by taking steps to stick with the development of nuclear weapons as a form of state defense, Kim certainly has thought about the impact that the PPB Security Council will have on maintaining nuclear activity⁶.

In a Kenneth Waltz article published in 1991. This article is titled "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities". In this article Kenneth Waltz refutes the argument that nuclear proliferation would increase international political instability or lead to war. Waltz stated that the fear that nuclear weapons would be used in war because of the failure of deterrence was a mistake. According to Waltz, the failure of deterrence that would result in warfare is possible, but only in conventional weapons. The deterrence caused by nuclear weapons according to Waltz will not lead to failure. Deterrence in question is one of the efforts in achieving international stability and world peace by carrying out defense efforts without military action or war. Deterrence can also be interpreted as an effort by the state to increase its ability and strength to ward off attacks from opponents or at least suppress and force opponents to think again to carry out

⁵ N. & Erwaty, 'Implikasi Hukum Ketidapatuhan Korea Utara Terhadap Resolusi Dewan Keamanan PBB Dalam Uji Coba Nuklir', *Journal of International Law*, 2017, 2–30.

⁶ Waltz.

attacks⁷.

If you look at empirical data to date, there has never been a nuclear war. even according to data released by the Uppsala Conflict data program, since the end of the cold war conflicts that occurred in the world are no longer in the form of interstate wars but are dominated by intrastate wars⁸. This is consistent with the argument of nuclear proliferation thinkers that the possession of nuclear weapons by many countries will not lead to nuclear war and can even create international stability. In addition, fears that nuclear proliferation would be used irresponsibly by leaders of authoritarian or revisionist states are also refuted. This is evidenced by North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons. North Korea, often referred to as a revisionist state and led by an authoritarian government, has never carried out a nuclear attack on its enemies. Even North Korea has never engaged in open war with any country, including South Korea, the United States, and Japan. North Korea as a nuclear weapon owner has also never launched attacks on United States alliance countries inside or outside NATO. This is also in accordance with the argument that the deterrence presented by a country's nuclear weapons will help protect the country's alliance⁹. Therefore, North Korea will not dare to start a nuclear war because that is not the goal of North Korea.

External Efforts

As a result of the strategy or internal efforts made by North Korea, countries in the Korean Peninsula region such as Japan and South Korea make alliances with the United States which is a super power. This cooperation is carried out to strengthen the defense of its military power which indirectly weakens North Korea's military strength. In order to gain power, Japan and South Korea have carried out both efforts, namely by purchasing an anti-missile defense system or Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) which is one example of developing military strategy and strength (internal efforts), and cooperating with the United States as a bandwagoning alliance (external efforts). THAAD is one of the systems created by the United States to deter North Korea's nuclear program. North Korea's development of a nuclear weapons program that is seen as a threat to the Korean Peninsula has led countries such as Japan and South Korea to counteract the threat by

⁷ S. Meilianawati, 'Pengaruh Implementasi Kebijakan Extended Deterrence Amerika Serikat Terhadap Kondisi Stabilitas Keamanan Semenanjung Korea', . . *Journal Ilmu Hubungan Internasional*, 2017, 1331–38.

⁸ F. Triantama, 'Proliferasi Nuklir Sebagai Pencipta Perdamaian Dunia Kontemporer: Sebuah Tinjauan Literatur', *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik*, 2021, 1–12.

⁹ F. & Sechser, 'Deterrence Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Detettence', *American Journal of Political Science*, 2014, 919–35.

creating alliances¹⁰.

In addition, the South Korean government also took two actions, namely requesting nuclear umbrella guarantees from the United States by strengthening cooperation and increasing conventional defense capabilities¹¹. This cooperation was in the form of a joint military exercise which was later named The Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG). After running joint exercises in military improvement through alliances. Now South Korea outperforms North Korean forces. South Korea currently has a total active force of about 34,500, including 495,000 Army, 70,000 Navy, 65,000 Air Force, and some 4,500 additional paramilitary forces. South Korea also has about 4.5 million reservists organized into first combat forces (mobilization reserve forces) or regional combat forces. In recent years, the South Korean military has been reinforced by the United States every year and the need for exercises is not small. During the cooperation, the improvement of both relations and military strength has increased rapidly. Barack Obama's presidency was a bright start for the alliance between the two countries. The United States provided military assistance to South Korea in the form of 40 M1 Abrams tanks, M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, and an additional 800 personnel. The United States provided assistance in the form of nearly \$5 billion in arms sales and nearly \$36 billion, or 2.2 percent of U.S. military spending on South Korea¹².

While the Japanese side of Shinzo Abe's government has 310,457 military personnel, 1,500 military aircraft, 679 battle tanks, 131 naval assets of which there are 36 destroyers and 17 ships, the country is not satisfied with its current military strength. Japan wants to buy two U.S. BMD systems, the Aegis Ashore and the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. In addition, Japan is considering the purchase of Tomahawk cruise missiles developed by the United States. This is done in Japan's deterrence and defense efforts amid the threat of growing global dynamics. Although this is only planning, it is not denied that Japan will buy the missile given the threat from North Korea's nuclear program, which has a fairly rapid development every year. Tomahawk itself is a long-range cruise missile that can face all-weather at subsonic speeds. The missile can reach targets more than 2000 km away accurately. The purchase of Tomahawk missiles is targeted by the Japanese government, which updates its long term security guidelines by the end of this year. The move comes in line with

¹⁰ L. & Azzqy, 'Kerjasama Militer Korea Selatan Dan Amerika Serikat Dalam Penempatan THAAD Sebagai Respon Atas Uji Coba Misil Balistik Korea Utara Periode 2013-2017', *Jurnal Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik Universitas Budi Luhur*, 2017, 104–14.

¹¹ Atiqah, 'Diema Keamanan Korea Selatan Dalam Menghadapi Nuklir Korea Utara', *Demokrasi & Otonomi Daerah*, 2017, 165–224.

¹² J. Desjardins, 'U.S. Military Personnel Deployments by Country. Us: Visual Capitalist', 2017.

heightened tensions over a series of provocative actions by North Korean missiles that passed through the Sea of Japan ¹³.

At the time of the Shinzo Abe government also made a new policy of changing its old defense doctrine and replacing it with a new defense white paper. The change that occurred was the replacement of the "Basic Defense Force Concept" to "Dynamic Defense Force". This means that Japan is required to be active in regional security, and not just take refuge in the military power of the United States. This happens because there are several factors, including related to the desire of the United States to protect the East Asian region from North Korean military forces that threaten the interests of the United States in Japan ¹⁴.

In practice, the military's security agenda largely revolves around the government's ability to defend itself from external military threats. As elites and populations begin to treat the armed forces of other nations as threats, interstate relations are classic military security dilemmas involving on the one hand the proliferation of military technology, the arms race, and the interaction of national policies for defense and deterrence on the other. This has a bad impact because with the advancement of military technology, especially nuclear development carried out by North Korea, countries in the Korean Peninsula Region also develop their weapons and war in the arms race is inevitable. Even Japan is willing to pour funds of US \$ 320 billion to spend on missiles capable of attacking enemies in the region. South Korea is investing 5.3 trillion won to develop strategic weapons to ward off North Korea's missiles¹⁵. At the interstate level, the military security agenda, especially about how countries equip themselves to use military force, is difficult to interpret and certainly the development of military power will be responded to by other countries.

Analysis The impact of North Korea's nuclear development on the security stability of the Korean Peninsula during the 2017-2021 Kim Jong Un administration is viewed from an Islamic perspective

Allah Almighty created a wide variety of things in the universe. Each object is created with its own distinctive properties and character. In this case, nuclear energy resources are among the objects created by Allah Almighty. In general, Allah Almighty

¹³ Hankam, 'Jepang Berencana Beli Rudal Tomahawk AS.', 2022 <<https://indonesiadefense.com/jepang-berencana-beli-rudal-tomahawk-as/>>.

¹⁴ A. F. Ayu, 'Upaya Jepang Dibawah Pemerintahan Shinxo Abe Dalam Meningkatkan Pertahanan Militer', *Jurnal Transformasi*, 2015, 89–2019.

¹⁵ CNN, 'Anggaran Militer Jepang Meroket, Terbesar Setelah Perang Dunia Kedua.', 2022.

has allowed people to make use of these different objects. Even the use of objects created by Allah SWT is written in His word in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 29 which means: "He is Allah who created everything on earth for you and He dwells in the sky, and he made seven heavens. And He is All-Knowing". (QS. Al-Baqarah: 29). In nuclear use or use, we as Muslims must see the side of the nuclear use. Because the haram of an object can only be determined based on postulates (Qur'an or al Hadith) that characteristically indicate the haram of the object. If on an object there is no evidence from the Qur'an or al Hadith that shows the haram of the object, then the law of the object is halal, because as we see nuclear has many benefits such as: Nuclear energy for pagan, Nuclear energy for Health, Nuclear energy for power plants.

Nuclear energy resources and nuclear radiation include objects that are not found in the verses of the Qur'an or Hadiths that specifically indicate its haram. Thus, nuclear energy resources and nuclear radiation are lawful objects. Because it is a lawful object, the original law of all actions intended to utilize nuclear energy resources and nuclear radiation with any benefit is mubah. The utilization of nuclear energy resources and nuclear radiation becomes haram if:

1. Such nuclear-related objects were obtained by illicit means
2. Used to commit illicit acts
3. Causing real hazard that befalls humans either directly or indirectly¹⁶.

Thus, it can be analyzed that Islam forbids the use of nukes owned by North Korea. The reason the author says haram is because:

1. Funds received for nuclear development are obtained in an illegitimate way, namely by stealing or stealing crypto assets and several other companies
2. North Korea's nuclear has been tested, which has disrupted the stability of security on the Korean Peninsula and directly endangered the people of Japan and South Korea.
3. The interests of North Korea's nuclear development are not basic or emergency, the development is considered for the completion of the country's military because most of its budget is allocated for nuclear development even

¹⁶ A. w. Harto, 'Korea Utara: Program Rudal Nuklir Didanai Dari Pencurian Kripto, Menurut Laporan PBB', 2018 <<https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia-60283859> >.

they are willing to become a poor country.

4. Nuclear development is solely for the benefit of its own country and has no benefit but poses a threat to the surrounding country because it has conducted several tests.

The conclusion is that Islam actually allows the use of nuclear because it has many benefits and has a role for human survival in various fields including energy, industry, medicine, hydrology, agriculture, biology, mining, pharmaceuticals, archaeology, research and the environment. For this reason, it is necessary to integrate nuclear energy with the Qur'an so that its use is useful for the welfare of mankind and the environment¹⁷. But it is different if used for military things which is certainly very dangerous, considering the explosion produced from a nuclear bomb is so large that it can threaten human lives, and this is proven as North Korea did in 2017 conducting a nuclear test that caused the tunnel to collapse and caused hundreds of casualties. As many as 100 workers at the nuclear development site were declared dead during the incident while 100 others died during the evacuation process¹⁸. And it can be said that such an Islamic perspective that safeguards the human soul from destruction is different from the perspective of defensive realism espoused by North Korea with its nuclear development projects carried out to maintain its regime and maintain its national security, despite risking the security of the people around it.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nuclear development carried out by North Korea during the reign of Kim Jong Un 2017- 2021 made the intensity of the Korean Peninsula even more heated. Moreover, in that year North Korea has conducted several nuclear tests that are considered dangerous to countries on the Korean Peninsula such as South Korea and Japan. When referring to the perspective of Defensive Realism there are 2 means for the state to maintain its national security, namely, First, internal efforts with increased economic capabilities, additional military power or developing better strategies. Second, External efforts by strengthening its alliance or weakening the enemy. This internal effort by North Korea is in accordance with the perspective of Defensive Realism, which is to develop its nukes to safeguard its national security from external threats. However, these

¹⁷ R. N. Nurhayati, 'Pemahaman Ulama Aceh Mengenai Energi Nuklir', *Jurnal Pendidikan Fisika Dan Fisika Terapan*, 2019.

¹⁸ R. D Suastha, 'Nuklir Korut Diduga Runtuhkan Terowongan, Ratusan Tewas', 2017 <<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20171101130043-113-252683/nuklir-korut-diduga-runtuhkan-terowongan-ratusan-tewas>>.

internal efforts have an external impact on the Korean Peninsula region, Countries such as Japan and South Korea felt threatened due to North Korea's nuclear presence which eventually made these 2 countries form a military alliance with the aim of weakening North Korea and buying some sophisticated military weapons from the United States. So from this it can be seen that the impact of North Korea's nuclear development makes countries in the Korean Peninsula region also participate in developing their military power which in the end an arms race in this region is inevitable. Meanwhile, viewed from an Islamic perspective, North Korea's nuclear development as a defensive effort as well as the realism perspective above is not appropriate because the use of nuclear weapons carried out by North Korea has exceeded

humanitarian limits and has cost many lives. This is not in accordance with Islamic teachings that uphold human values and human survival.

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