

THE UNITED STATES INTEREST BEHIND THE NORTH KOREA MISSILE CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Conflict in the Korean Peninsula has been started since the Korean war 1950-1953, and still, there is no peaceful achievement to end it. Several efforts have been held to solve peacefully, such as bringing North Korea to be a part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). U.S. former president, Jimmy Carter, also initiated Agreed Framework, a scheme of resolution of nuclear energy by involving the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Since 2003, Russia, China joint to the United States, South Korea, Japan, and North Korea to start the negotiation over nuclear issues in North Korea, but after the fifth round of these series, no significant achievement attained. Since there is still a threat to Japan and South Korea, the U.S. presence in East Asia gets *raison detre*'. Besides, there are chances to U.S. in this conflictual situation to promote its weaponry system. Based on its experience in the Gulf War, the United States can also introduce and sell weaponry system, especially the missile technology. This paper tries to explore the advantage of the U.S. in the conflictual situation.

Keywords: *missile technology, conflict, promotion.*

A. Introduction

The tension in the Korean Peninsula in mid-September 2017 has been aggregating as the policy interaction between states concerned in this region has increased. Missile test policy, which has been conducted by North Korea, received many responses. North Korea claimed that the missile test is part of its constitutional rights in defense. Contradict with other states such as Japan and South Korea, of course; the missile tests are dangerous considering the missile range could reach the whole East Asian region. If this missile is combined with a nuclear warhead, it will become the most lethal weapon in the world.

While the United States is the most aggressive country in responding the Kim Jong Un's policy, President Trump made numerous statements that seemed to give the Kim Jong Un regime a lesson immediately, which he called *The Little Rocket*. President Trump's threat is also sturdy, which includes the statement that Foreign Minister Rex Tillerson's mission to conduct a peaceful talk with Pyongyang is a waste of time. Furthermore, almost at the same time, Trump also sent a Ronald Reagan's Naval Base to stand by in Hong Kong (Zhou, 2017), although there is no guarantee that the United States will carry out the preemptive attack against North Korea.

If we trace back, the actual conflict in the Korean Peninsula is one of the most prolonged battles in history after the Arab-Israel conflict. Various attempts and negotiating schemes to

resolve the dispute, even involving the parties outside Korea. Since the government of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il in North Korea, a number of negotiations have been held. For instance, a collective effort to secure the Korean Peninsula free from the nuclear threat by becoming part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985. The peaceful initiative in this peninsula was also proposed by Jimmy Carter, which resulted in the *Agreed Framework*, which was a step forward because North Korea was willing to disassemble the nuclear reactor to be replaced by a water reactor.

Negotiation initiatives were also carried out by involving many countries that are influential towards North Korea. Six-Party Talks has been conducted since 2003 in Beijing by presenting China, Russia, Japan, and the United States, and the two Koreas. The negotiation in which the world's attention was held for five series but failed to reach an agreement of denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula.

This differs from other conflicts such as Arab-Israel, Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, and others, which eventually reach an end despite having to go through military force. Therefore, it is interesting to discuss the long duration of this conflict settlement. It is possible that there is an intention to let this conflict drag while seeking another interest behind it. This paper tries to reveal the opportunities for what the United States can benefit from this conflict.

B. Result and Discussion

a. Kim Jong Un and Korea's Guided Missile Policy

The dispute between the two Koreas is a historical legacy from the Cold War after the country was split into two parts after the Korean War 1950-1953. Korea becomes an icon of the ideological conflict between communism and liberalism. Like the predecessors such as Kim Jong Nam and Kim Jong Il had laid the foundation of their country's policy encompassed towards communism.

However, there are differences between Kim Jong Un and his predecessors. Research insinuates that Kim Jong Un's leadership vision is different from his predecessor, Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Un, prioritize the military supremacy (military-first) like the era of Kim Il Sung's grandfather. Nevertheless, Kim Jong Un's leadership style is more authoritative by positioning himself as central in the decision-making process. The government role is run by the party. The party is controlled by the military, and there are 11 main people (after the reduction from 16), and they are the chief advisers to Kim Jong Un.

Kim Jong Un is the youngest North Korean leader who came in power at the age of 33. He had studied in Europe for two years. His controversial character started to draw attention when he tried to get rid of the people he does not like, including his uncle Jang Song Thaek. The death of his eldest brother Kim Jong Nam still left a question.

His leadership vision, which emphasizes the military operation, has

been exhibited the development of two types of lethal weapon, namely nuclear and missile. Within the last months, Kim Jong Un released a statement and policy which surprised the neighboring country which claiming the success in making the hydrogen bomb (Berlinger & Ullah, 2017) and the success of Hwasong-12 missile test. Currently, North Korea has possessed various types of missiles such as Nodong, Taepo Dong, Hwasong, which claimed by Kim Jong Un it could reach the United States region. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister of North Korea issued a statement that North Korea has the right to shoot the American aircraft even though it is outside the North Korean jurisdiction, as a response the Trump's speech, which is ready to deploy an attack Pyongyang.

b. Nuclear Issue

North Korea's nuclear development actually started in 1956 as part of cooperation with the Soviet Union. This cooperation began by sending the North Korean scientists to Moscow, considering the inadequate technology capability that North Korea had. In 1965, cooperation between North Korea and the Soviet Union had been increasing as there was an agreement to build the first nuclear reactor in North Korea, Yongbyon, although it had only small capacity and small construction of a nuclear reactor in Yongbyon. The nuclear development program is considered by Kim Il Sung as the only way to face South Korea or other world communities. In addition, Kim Il Sung's plan is prioritized to develop a missile

power. The combination of nuclear energy and missile launch capability is frightening.

In 1977, the North Korea nuclear program had increased and drawn the United States and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) attention, which started to monitor. In 1982, the United States satellites captured an image signal showing the development of nuclear energy power in North Korea that has reached 50MW. South Korea and Japan, along with the United States, started to pay attention to this development, although Pyongyang claimed that this development was still limited to the private interest.

In 1985, North Korea ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) with the consequences of stopping all of its nuclear activities. Meanwhile, the atomic energy need in North Korea will be supported by Japan and South Korea as well as the United States. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea's stance was further cushioned by the signing of reconciliation agreement and non-aggression between the two Koreas. South Korea's commitment has been shown by Roh Taewoo's promise to ensure there will be no more nuclear weapons in the country. In the following year, North Korea allowed IAEA to inspect the Pyongyang's nuclear program.

The tension came to surface again due to the findings IAEA was not the same with the report from the government, and IAEA requested a special inspection. This proposal was rejected by North Korea and threatened

to withdraw its signatories from NPT. President Clinton and South Korea exposed to stop their help to North Korea. Even Clinton threatened to carry out a preemptive strike. However, due to the Jimmy Carter's diplomacy, the involving parties in nuclear crisis agreed to sign the Geneva agreement or Agreed Frame Work where North Korea would stop its nuclear program with the compensation of light water reactor equipped 2000MW power by South Korea, Japan, and the United States with the Scheme of Korean Peninsula Development Organization (KEDO).

After the tension calmed down since 1994, the crisis escalated again in 2002 when Pyongyang acknowledged the U.S. Assistant of Secretary of State's statement, James Kelly, regarding North Korea's effort in collecting the uranium. Likewise, President Bush bravely stated that North Korea is the axis of evil. With that, all that was sought in the Geneva agreement collapsed.

The leadership transition from Kim Jong Il to his son, Kim Jong Un, was not calming down the tension. Contradictory, Kim Jong Un decided on an aggressive policy in regard to the North Korea weaponry system. Kim Jong Un confidently keeps on continuing his nuclear policy and conducted many missile tests. In August 2017, North Korea tested its Hwasong-12 missile, which is classified as Inter Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). Un stated that the entire United States region is now under the North Korean missile range.

c. The United States Policy

As one of the superpower countries and leaders in East bloc during the Cold War, the United States attempted to give protection to its allies across the world, including the East Asian region. South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan are its closest allies. Hence, the presence of the United States troops in South Korea and Japan during the Cold War could be interpreted as the building of alliance. The Cold War era might be ended where the ideological conflict is at a low level, but currently, another threat comes from North Korea. It may be the ideological matter, rather a strategic conflict between the American allies against the North Korean regime.

Regarding the nuclear program in North Korea, the United States has created various policies with a peaceful approach to resolve this conflict. The United States, along with IAEA, has designed the scheme about denuclearization, such as carrying out a series of talks and settlement schemes. In 1985, the United States was able to pressure North Korea to sign the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty or NPT.

America was also involved in this crisis settlement scheme through the Geneva agreement in the Agreed Framework. This treaty covers Japan and South Korea to be liable for the construction of the non-nuclear reactor, whereas the United States was responsible in supplying the solar needs for electricity before the non-nuclear reactor construction finished. The effort pioneered by Jimmy Carter has successfully brought the tension down

for several years until North Korea started to enrich its uranium again as a means for providing energy and defense power.

The United States initiative was also enthusiastic in creating the Six-Party Talks; a negotiation carried out by six countries in finding the best solution for the nuclear development crisis in North Korea. The six countries include North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, the United States, and Japan. The first series of talks were held in Beijing, China, with enthusiastic delegates. Chinese Deputy of Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, noted that there are at least six crucial points in the first round of Six-Party Talks, including the commitment of cooperation in order to find the peaceful and dialogical solution, free Korea from the nuclear threat. However, until the fifth of this forum, it seemed that it has not been able to find the expected solution, which is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (Blank, 2007).

d. Justification Strategy for the United States Presence

The difficulties faced in finding the end of this Korean Peninsula conflict raised many speculations and left a big question mark to the commitment of involved parties, including the United States' reluctance in imposing the unilateral action as was done in other conflicts. Despite all of that, the adverse condition in an area or a party could become another advantage. A dispute between two-party frequently gave an opportunity for other parties. In international politics, the most important thing is how a country's

interest could be achieved in both peace and conflict situations.

Reflecting on this, there are several opportunities that can be benefitted by the United States in the murky situation in the Korean Peninsula conflict. First as the justification of the U.S. military troops in the region, second as the bounding alliance, and the third as the promotion and trading of weapon. These last two factors would be discussed after this part.

The United States has been presented in Asia since the Cold War as the implementation of the containment policy against the spreading ideology of communism. The U.S. presence has been manifested in two schemes, which are the presence of the U.S. military troop and the economic assistance. In Asia, there are two significant issues that forced the .S.U.S. to involve in the conflict, such as the Korean War 1950-1953 and Vietnam War 1955-1975. Besides, in order to secure the safety of the alliances, the U.S. also built a military base in considerably strategic locations. For example, the deployment in the Clark airbase, and Subic Naval Base in the Philippines, and deployment of troops in Okinawa Japan, as well as the implementation of soldiers to Afghanistan and Guam.

Along with the end of the Cold War, thus the significance of the .S.U.S. military troop presence has lessened. The emergence of North Korea as the new nuclear threat became a new legitimation for the .S.U.S. military troop presence to ensure its national interest. The report from RAND asserted, "...in

Asia, the United States faces competing demands. The United States aims to deter North Korea and other major conflicts in Northeast Asia, but the concentration of U.S. forces in South Korea and Japan keeps those forces under threat from numerous precision-guided missile" (Lostumbo, 2013)

In 2017, there are 28,500 US military troops deployed in South Korea (Revere, 2016). Meanwhile, in Japan, there is at least 54,000 personnel (Beech, 2016). And in Guam, there is 7000 personnel equipped with the war fleet. Of course, this number is not included those who are located in the naval base in the international waters.

Nonetheless, the presence of the U.S. military troops is primarily needed to ensure the continuity of the US-Asia trade. The trade volume and the U.S. economic interest in East Asia in particular and Asia, in general, requires a reliable security guarantee. Besides business, the presence of the U.S. could be perceived as core to protect the interest over its investment assets in this region. Within the U.S. Ten partner countries, four of them are China, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong.

e. Bounding Alliance

As long as the Korean conflict continues, the presence of U.S. military troops will get the justification. The Korean conflict is able to become binding between the U.S. and its allies. When there are protests and controversy over the deployment of the U.S. troops overseas, for instance, Japan, the nuclear threat could maintain its presence.

Furthermore, the justification of North Korea's nuclear threat is able to bind for cooperation with its allies. For example, South Korea is a country that is threatened the most over the nuclear and missile policy from North Korea, has tied the cooperation between the United States and the placement of THAAD anti-missile.

Yoichi Kato from Asahi Shimbun firmly stated that in addition to increasing the deterrence, the military presence also strengthened the cohesiveness of its allies.

U.S. forces will conduct a sustainable pace of presence operations abroad, including rotational deployments and bilateral and multilateral training exercises. These activities reinforce deterrence, help to build the capacity and competence of U.S., allied, and partner forces for internal and external defense, strengthen alliance cohesion and increase U.S. influence. A reduction in resources will require innovative and creative solutions to maintain our support for allied and partner interoperability and building partner capacity. (Shimbun & Kato, n.d.).

Michael J. Lostumbo adds, in sort, the U.S. global presence is intended to contribute to long-standing strategic goals of assuring partners and deterring potential adversaries (Lostumbo, 2013, p. 73).

f. Weapon Promotion and Trading

Learn from Gulf War II; this conflict could bring certain benefits to other parties. The Iraq invasion against Kuwait in August 2, 1990, gave the opportunities for the United States to carry out a joint attack with coalition troops against the Iraq troop in Kuwait. First, the United States could introduce the reliability of its weaponry system; one of them is anti-missile, known as Patriot missile. In that war, the patriot missiles were able to block 44 Scud missiles fired by Iraq to Israel and Saudi Arabia (Sullivan, 1999).

Second, in the Gulf War, America could pressure its allies, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, to bear the sharing burden for the war cost. Third, the post-Gulf War, the .S.U.S. weaponry system, was significantly ordered by its allies. In other words, the weapon trade has increased dramatically. It is true that the use of force is a state monopoly while involving the private sectors to produce the weapon. This is where the business side begins in the war industry (Gnaedinger, n.d.).

If we reflect the market for the .S.U.S. weapon industry, East Asia is the second biggest market after the .S.U.S. itself. For example, the volume of sale of the U.S. weapon to Taiwan in 2010 reached the amount of US\$ 6.4 billion, including the purchasing of 114 anti-Patriot-missiles, 60 Blackhawk Helicopter, two minesweepers, F-16, and etc. (Lee, 2010). Whereas at the beginning of the Trump presidency, he managed to announce the sales of weapons to Taiwan reach US\$ 1.364 billion.

The US-Taiwan Business Council today welcomed the decision by the U.S. Department of State to announce its approval of seven possible Foreign Military Sales to Taiwan, with a total value of US\$1.363 billion. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) delivered the required certifications notifying Congress of the proposed Taiwan arms sales on June 29, 2017. A direct commercial deal was also announced, bringing the total to approximately US\$1.4 billion

Besides Australia, Japan, Japan, and South Korea as the leading consumer for the United States weapon industry. If it compared geographically, the Middle East region has the most volume sales, followed by Asia, Latin America, Europe, and Africa, from the conflicts that determine the number of sales.

C. Conclusion

The nuclear crisis and missile in the Korean Peninsula have lasted for more than half a century. Various

negotiations and efforts to settle the conflict have been attempted, but tension after tension seemed unable to find a bright spot to reach an end. In the other side, there is a tendency of the United States not to carry out a preemptive military strike against North Korea despite the fact that North Korea openly conducted periodic missile tests.

In this situation, the United States is still able to take advantage of this murky situation to reinforce its presence (military troop) in the East Asian region in particular and entire Asia in general, especially after the ideological conflict of East-West finished. The nuclear crisis would actually give stronger legitimation that the United States alliance still need the presence of their troops in order to maintain undesirable situations.

The Korean peninsula crisis also gave opportunities for the United States to promote weaponry products that were demanded the most. If the Patriot missile in the Gulf War became the most popular, then in the Korean Peninsula crisis seemed to be replaced by the newer model of weapon, THAAD.

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