

CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE OF NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR NORTH KOREA'S EXISTANCE

This chapter discuss about how crucial the nuclear program for North Korea survival in securing its national interest. In chapter III the writer will conduct deep analysis towards the pattern and motive that being used by North Korea in defending its nuclear program from pressure comes from its International Community as well as to emphasize how North Korea's nuclear program played a major role in strengthening its position.

A. Nuclear Program as Strategy to Secure National Interest

Based on the writer research, North Korea political behavior indicated the same repeated pattern. Specifically in terms of nuclear program, there are lots series of event happened in the past showing how North Korea could position itself despite any situation occurred in that time. After numerous of agreement, meeting and talks the writer analyze and infer that Pyongyang is actually has no intention of discontinuing its nuclear program. The best argument in supporting this statement can be seen in North Korea motivations for nuclear proliferation. The writer believed based on the research, that North Korea will not willingly discontinue its nuclear program because its nuclear capability is too important and has significant effect to both the political aspect and economy aspect of the Kim regime. Although there are so many attempt in negotiating the nuclear program for an exchange of aid, still there are so many things at stake if North Korea gave up its nuclear program.(Jong Kun Choi, 2016)

At the present time, North Korea can be thought of as declining totalitarian state, where the basic foundations of the totalitarian order remain in place, even though substantial changes to the political economy of the state have break down social controls. This specific economic transformation has cause political change at the grass-roots level that is undercutting the institutions of the old order. North Korea under Kim Jong Un administration is utilizing the nuclear program as a way to regenerate the totalitarian order through its use as a bargaining tool to acquire significant inputs for the economy. It is also use as a symbol that showing self reliance, as a symbol of self sufficient in regime propaganda, and as a strategy to secure bureaucratic interests within the military, the paramount institution in North Korea (Hughes, 2007)

Therefore it seems obvious that the nuclear program can't be separated to the political-economy of the Kim regime because it is strongly related each other. This explained why all the efforts and struggle that have being done by International Community to denuclearize North Korea always failed. North Korea's reasons and stance in keep developing its nuclear program categorized in several aspects: national security; domestic politics; and international diplomacy

1. National Security

In terms of the North Korea's national security, the nuclear capability provides a low-cost strategic equalizer against US and South Korean forces across the demilitarized zone (DMZ), providing a deterrent against possible attack or invasion from the South. Technically, North Korea and South Korea are still at war. The only agreement that make both countries now seems to be at normal stake was only because of armistice. This explained the complex situation that occurred in North Korea. North Korea used it nuclear capability as the bargaining power from its enemy.

In order to compete or adjust with its enemy North Korea should build a strong and equal power. North Korea mostly use this kind of argument that the only reason why they keep developing their nuclear program is to protect themselves from external threat. The United States as the opposite maintains the world's largest nuclear arsenal and has issued several threats to use nuclear weapons against the North Korea over the past half-century. Moreover the United States power also begins to escalate In East Asia. This situation make North Korea really have to find a strategic move to secure their country by building a powerful weapon. Despite United States dominance, the geopolitical condition in the East Asia also affecting the decision-making process of North Korea. North Korea tried to be self-sufficient in terms of securing their country and not depending on other so that it could avoid unnecessary entanglement in the Japanese rivalry. For a small and remote country like North Korea, the development of nuclear program is extremely crucial because it is the strongest reason why the other countries could taking seriously in taking care of any issue regarding North Korea(Gartzke, 2009)

2. Domestic Politic

Beside national security, the nuclear program has its own special value for Kim Jong Un regime in the context of domestic politics, where it has become a tool ensure legitimacy. This concept is beyond the national security because it is crucial for defending the Kim Jong Un power from inside of the country. The obstacles and challenges not only come from the outside of the country. In fact, one of the ironic things that occurred in the international relations world is that sometimes the best way to destroy a country is not from the war with other country, but from within. The North Korea nuclear program played a major role to ensure that wont happen to their country.

In explaining the role of nuclear program in the domestic politic the writer would breakdown the facts and then analyzed it comprehensively. The idea firstly came from Kim Jong-il that preserve his power through the introduction of Songun or 'military-first' politics, which is based on the idea of making North Korea a 'strong and powerful country'²⁴. Kim Jong-Il used the military power as his propaganda to ensure his power over his people. The nuclear program played role in this regard at two aspects.

The first role of nuclear program is to gives an ideological rallying point to justify centralization of the nation's key resources to the military. By doing such thing, the North Korea will create a national paradigm that the military should have privilege and priority in achieving the state resources. Therefore all of the country resources and fund could be allocate to the military sector without the protest and compromise from the citizen of North Korea. North Korea conduct such way that could make people of North Korea accepted the fact that the need to cover their daily life is less important than the military interest. This explained the situation that always happen in North Korea when the people of that country always suffer from economy downturn and categorized as the low income country but on the other hand could consistently and significantly develop their nuclear program (JR, 2005)

Second, the nuclear program is being use as the characteristic of North Korea's unique anti-American nationalism. The North Korea has kept spreading the propaganda of anti-American and anti-imperialist through times to its people. This thing was being done to tackle any west values influence that could threat the position of North Korean leader. The North Korea nuclear weapon development also being use as a tool to build image building towards the powerfulness of North Korea from the perspective of its people.

In the context of domestic politics, the leader of North Korea have to make sure that they can get their people loyalty by creating a dogma that the country that they live in is secure and strong. That way all of the possible threat that could be happened in the form of overthrow of power or civil war can be eliminated. It is very crucial to tackle the western value influence with another value from its country that is being done by conducting the nuclear program development propaganda to show the North Korea absolute power

As a tool to ensuring Kim Jong Un legitimacy in the domestic politics, he adopted a law that known as Nuclear Weapons State Law(KIM, 2017), which includes the following ten points:

1. Nuclear weapons are a self-defensive means of coping with the hostile policy of and nuclear threat from the United States.
2. Nuclear weapons serve the purpose of deterring and repelling aggression and retaliating against enemies.
3. The DPRK is strengthening its nuclear deterrence and retaliatory strike power both in quantity and quality.
4. Nuclear weapons will only be used on the final order of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army.
5. Nuclear weapons will not be used against non-nuclear weapons states unless they join a hostile nuclear weapons state in its invasion of the DPRK.
6. The DPRK maintains safe management of nuclear weapons and ensures stable nuclear tests.
7. The DPRK has established a mechanism to prevent the illegal export of nuclear technology and nuclear materials.
8. The DPRK will cooperate with international efforts toward nuclear nonproliferation and the safe management of nuclear materials.

9. The DPRK strives to avoid the danger of a nuclear war and fully supports international nuclear disarmament efforts.
10. The relevant institutions will take steps to implement this ordinance

The Nuclear Weapons State Law was created as a prove of how serious the ambition of Kim Jong Un towards the development of nuclear program. Moreover this law also had a special meaning concerning the direction of its related policies which were all related to either economic or military policies. This law demonstrates the strategic direction of North Korea's use of nuclear weapons both in diplomatic and military dimensions. After the creation of the law, Kim Jong Un will be more flexible in conducting his move to the development of its nuclear program to secure his country interest (Morgan P. , 2009)

3. International Diplomacy

North Korea's activities in increasing and developing the scope of its nuclear program represented a demand for a state to be treated equally or even as a major power in the global politics. It is already become the common thing where the leaders of a country that categorized as nuclear-armed states, having a nuclear weapon gives them greater influence in their relations with other countries and strengthen their position to secure their national interests. A small country like North Korea which has low level in economy sector, unstable political condition, lack of natural resources will not be considered as a profitable ally or partner for other countries, making North Korea position powerless. However by having nuclear weapon in their country made the opposite country in the negotiation table put a serious attention on the North Korea interest.

The other countries would think twice about the risk and consequences that could happen if there's no good outcome as a result. This situation lifted up the position of North Korea in the International Community. The effect of North Korea possession of nuclear program can be seen in how it influenced the relation with other countries, specifically in Northeast Asia. It happens to be the fact that North Korea is surrounded by powerful country. This makes the situation is more complex and difficult for North Korea, but because of the nuclear program at least North Korea could have something that can be bargain power from.

The use of showing off strategy towards the possession of nuclear program is not something new for nuclear weapon country. It signaled that their major interest are offended or threaten and it could also indicate that they already made their final move and not expecting for any kind of interruption. The possession of nuclear program could make North Korea in a strategic position. During conducting diplomacy, North Korea could bring its nuclear program issue to be discussed and relating it to the specific matter in the diplomatic situation. This strategy has already been conducted by North Korea through times (Cheol, 2012)

As a study case, to support the pervious statement, the writer analyzed the incident that happened in October 2006 when North Korea conducted its nuclear test. Based on the writer observation, during that time the nuclear test was not merely a demonstration of North Korea's nuclear capability. It is actually more than that. It is an act of sending the diplomatic signal to warn that the unfreezing of North Korean assets was a crucial North Korea's national interest at that time. From this incident, it can be seen in how North Korea uses the nuclear program as a tool to conduct diplomacy. After that, it is clear that North Korea would not so easily to give up its nuclear program because it's very crucial and use it to demand the fast respond from United States (Lin, 2006)

It can be seen from this situation that a nuclear capability gives a strong position for North Korea. Not only that, North Korea also use the nuclear program as the bargaining tool to recover from the decline of its economy sector by asking an aid from the international community. This is a huge thing for North Korea because one-third of its spending are come from the fund of international aid (Cohen, 2017) At this point North Korea really successful in making the nuclear program played a dominant role in ensuring the existence of the country. If it's not because of North Korea's nuclear program they will not be recognize by the international community. The recognition of other countries is very important for North Korea because it means that their power is being admitted by the other countries. Moreover, the reason why the recognitions of other countries are crucial is because the one who have authority to give support aid to countries is the International Community, or in this context is United Nation. North Korea nuclear program act like the center of gravity in the way North Korea secure its interest.

The North Korea's primary focus is in the military sector. It is very crucial because the military sector are the reason why North Korea can still securing its interest and still able to survive despite any challenges and tackles in the form of sanction and pressure given by the International Community. Nevertheless, the way North Korea focusing on its military sector are quiet controversial. The North Korea is backed up by the International Community to recover from its economy breakdown. Nevertheless, North Korea allocated some of the international aid support that could be used in the humanitarian and economy sector into it military sector. The way North Korea manage the aid is less effective. For example, aid shipments are distributed by the military and they become a rent-seeking commodity as they are diverted from formal distribution channels to be sold for huge profit by the military on the private market (Snyder, 2009)

B. The North Korea's Strategic Pattern as a Tool of Survival

Based on the writer research, the North Korea always conducted the same pattern in this specific matter. The coercive bargaining strategy was used by North Korea consistently since very beginning. North Korea deliberately yet carefully conducted a provocation for the other countries to give support and solution as in the way all of those solutions will save North Korea from the decline. The interesting part is that this provocation should be set in such way so it won't cause a war because there would be no win-win situation if war occurred. However the provocation is serious enough to raise the concern about possible escalation in the future. After the involving countries "eat the bait" of the provocation North Korea will directly conduct its maneuver (Gartzke, 2009)

The act of maneuver after the provocation is being done by issuing new demands or restating its previous claims as conditions for a return to negotiations. This repeated pattern shows that North Korea is not serious in the matter of denuclearization deal. When negotiations had finally reached a point where the Pyongyang was being asked to take significant steps toward nuclear dismantlement, steps that could finally eradicate the ability of North Korea in developing nuclear weapon, North Korea conduct a maneuver to find a way that not lead them to the fully dismantlement. In this period of time, the North Korea nuclear program already reached the settle and stable point. However it was not a good position for North Korea in the negotiation table because the compensation that offered was less than before. North Korea realized that the nuclear program is the ultimate priority that already being used to secure it interest for times. If North Korea wanted to give up its nuclear program, even if it seems impossible, the compensation needed to be extraordinary.

One of the strongest reasons why nuclear program is very crucial for the existence of North Korea survival is because apparently the North Korea already learn from the history of how a country that used to have nuclear power giving up it without a good calculation and strategy. What happened in Iraq, where Saddam Hussein still became the leader of his country at that time was overthrown by the United States. (Institute, 2008). The other case can also be seen in Libya where Moammar Gaddafi finally gave up his nuclear ambitions in exchange for aid and sanctions relief was finally killed after the United States involve and conduct military intervention in his country's civil war. Kim Jong Un as the leader of North Korea realize what are the risk and possible consequences that should be took if he gave up his nuclear power. Judging from his fellow leader of a country that used to have nuclear power, Kim Jong Un will be very firm in defending his nuclear power. If it seen from the pattern that happened in Iraq and Libya, the only possible way to prevent United States military intervention is by having a nuclear power that able to create a threat to United States itself. Moreover, Kim Jong Un do aware about the result and outcome from the increasing progress of North Korea nuclear program that could strengthening his country position in the global world(Braut, 2016)

Figure 3.3 President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein (left) and President of Libya, Muammad Gaddafi (Right)



(Source: National Security Review.

<https://warontherocks.com/2016/11/why-saddam-and-gaddafi-failed-to-get-the-bomb/>)

Through times, Pyongyang has been using its nuclear program as a tool for bargaining power, in this context is by extracting external aid from the international community. The nuclear program is being used in such way like if North Korea reducing its activity on the nuclear program they could be cooperative, because by doing so they will get the aid from the international community. This fact is explaining the importance of North Korea nuclear program for North Korea existence and survival. However, a dynamic situation change always happens in the international relation world. North Korea could not always use the same pattern to securing their interest by its nuclear program.

The peak point is when the Six-Party Talk is no longer considered effective to solve the North Korean issue on nuclear program. By the end of Six Party Talks, which always been used by North Korea as a forum or meeting when it can extract support and aid from International Community, the North Korea need to re arrange its strategy to save its economy sector from breakdown (Telegraph, 2012)