

***BALANCE OF POWER* NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION POLICY
NORTH KOREA ACCORDING TO KENNET WALTZ'S NEOREALISM
PERSPECTIVE**

**Anwar Mas'adi¹, Mohammad Syauqi Abdullahi²,
Sirojudin Ibn Nur³, Beryl Labiq Hanani⁴**

Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang

Abstract

Nuclear weapons, since their emergence in 1945, have become a global cause for concern. In the realm of international politics, two primary viewpoints have arisen. Firstly, there is the perspective that supports nuclear proliferation, asserting that every nation's freedom to possess nuclear weapons can create global stability. Secondly, there is the viewpoint that opposes proliferation, with the belief that the possession of nuclear weapons should be restricted to prevent an arms race and nuclear warfare. In this context, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) emerged in 1970 with the goal of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. While many countries, including the five nuclear-armed states, have joined the NPT, North Korea became a member in 1985 but later withdrew in 2003. North Korea, with its nuclear policy, has stirred international tensions. They view nuclear weapons as a tool to safeguard their sovereignty and maintain their presence in international politics. From a neorealism perspective, the concept of the balance of power becomes relevant, with concerted efforts to balance power as a means to achieve power equilibrium and prevent the dominance of superpowers. North Korea conducted a series of nuclear tests from 2006 to 2017, resulting in strong reactions from the international community, including sanctions imposed by the United Nations. North Korea believes that nuclear weapons will provide them with significant leverage and protect their sovereignty. In the context of North Korea's nuclear proliferation, the neorealism approach and the concept of balance of power offer insights into the dynamics, their influence on other nations, the responses of the international community, and their impact on global stability.

Keywords: Proliferation, Nuclear, North Korea, Neorealism

A. INTRODUCTION

In 1945, the international world was shocked by the presence of a weapon that had extraordinary power, namely nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons represent advances in the field of weapons technology. With a small amount, nuclear weapons are so destructive that they can destroy a city through their explosive power and the radiation they produce. This can be seen in the first and only use when America used atomic bombs to knock out Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the massive devastating effects caused by the use of nuclear weapons, it is not

surprising that nuclear weapons are considered to have the greatest deterrent effect. Therefore, it is not surprising that many countries are interested in acquiring nuclear weapons.¹

With the presence of nuclear weapons, it opens up a new discourse on how the world should respond to it. At least international political thinkers looking at nuclear weapons from a security aspect have two views. The first view, a view that agrees on nuclear proliferation. With the freedom of every country to develop nuclear weapons technology, it is considered to be able to bring stability and world peace. Unlike the first view, the second view is precisely the counter to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. According to this second view, the possession of nuclear weapons in the world must be limited in order to maintain the stability of world security. Because if all countries are allowed to have nuclear weapons, it will risk triggering a nuclear race and even nuclear war. From this view then gave birth to the nuclear non-proliferation regime, which later resulted in the ²*Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT).

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an international treaty that aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy so as to create nuclear disarmament in its entirety to nuclear weapon states. This agreement entered into force in 1970, then on May 11, 1995 the agreement was extended indefinitely. A total of 191 countries at the time had joined the treaty, including five nuclear-weapon states ³

North Korea on December 12, 1985 also approved the NPT, but did not finalize an afeguard agreement or protection agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA is the safeguarding body of the NPT agreement used to verify compliance with the agreement through inspections. On January 10, 2003, North Korea officially announced that it was withdrawing from the NPT. Since then North Korea has publicly embarked on a nuclear strategy with its first test in 2006.

With his policy, it then made North Korea much discussed in international forums. Because of this, this country is known as one of the countries that is quite respected and considered dangerous in the eyes of the international world. But keep in mind, North Korea's nuclear policy must have an interest in it. Nukes became a means for North Korea to demonstrate its existence in international diplomacy as well as a tool for the regime's interests.⁴

¹ Triantama, 2021)

² Triantama, 2021.

³ Adam. R, 2023.

⁴ Manoe et al., 2022.

Despite a lot of international condemnation, North Korea continues to carry out the mission of developing nuclear weapons, because it is one way to balance the power of superpowers such as the United States that can threaten their sovereignty at any time. In North Korea's foreign policy, making nuclear a tool to maintain its existence certainly requires a lot of political considerations which are certainly not easy, considering that this country is still struggling to feed its people. However, the agreed policy became a model of North Korea's foreign policy while insisting on developing its main weapon, nukes. Without nukes, North Korea cannot exert its influence internationally.⁵

With this background, there is a need for a deeper analysis related to the phenomenon of nuclear weapons proliferation in North Korea. Therefore, the theory that the author will use is neorealism. Neorealism shares the assumption with classical realism that international structures are essentially anarchy. With the *security dilemma* (security dilemma). A world condition where a country will never be able to be sure of the will of another country in the future. This lack of trust makes countries always wary of potential threats that will interfere with the defense of their sovereignty.

In overcoming the *security dilemma* (*security dilemma*) one of the methods used is *balance of power*. *Balance of power* itself is a concept that refers to the distribution of power among countries. *balance of power*. Aims to maintain stability and avoid the domination of the power of one country or an alliance of certain countries. There are many understandings of *balance of power*, but basically this concept has the aim of ensuring that no state can hold absolute power.

Thus, the massive nuclear weapons proliferation policy carried out by North Korea is one of the interesting phenomena to be studied in the development of international political science studies, also related to how the dynamics of its development, its influence on other countries, especially superpowers, the response issued, and the overall impact on international stability.

B. LITERATURE RIVIEW

Neorealism

The Neorealism paradigm is one of the paradigms that is still relatively new. This paradigm of Neorealism was first introduced by Kennet Waltz, It has a history dating back to the end of the second world war and at the time of the Cold War.

⁵ Al Shahrin, 2018.

Neorealism generally emerged as a basic assumption of classical realism. However, Kenneth Waltz's thought focuses on structure, so neorealism is also often referred to as "structural realism". Unlike realism, neorealism from Waltz's perspective does not consider human nature at all and ignores the ethics of statehood. Neorealism assumes that the actions of state actors are governed by structure. The role of actors in the international world is very limited, because every action is influenced by coercion and demands from international structures. According to Waltz, actors are simply products of structure. Formed due to the presence of capacity *Power* that every country has.⁶

In the view of neorealism, the fundamental conflictual nature of human beings has no impact on state behavior in international politics. According to neorealism, the international structure is essentially anarchy and thus forces states to be aggressive . In conditions of anarchy, a country can never predict the will of another state in the future. The uncertainty experienced causes each country to be busy strengthening their security to achieve the maximum possible security and strength capabilities. ⁷

The existence of *Balance of power* is the most realistic effort made to create balance *Power* between countries. Power is a material capability that can be controlled by the state. In an effort to balance *Power*, the neorealists agree that the military and the economy are decisive, therefore, the existence of alliances between states is necessary, despite the reality Cooperation between countries is like a figment. Neorealism does not deny that cooperation between countries can occur. However, according to them, cooperating countries will always strive to maximize both relative power, benefits, and maintain their autonomy ⁸

The existence of a balance *of power* is not absolute to achieve world peace, the conflictual nature of the state encourages state behavior in international politics. According to neorealism, the international structure is essentially anarchy, forcing states to be aggressive.

Balance Of Power

Balance of power is a concept of Neorealism thought that refers to a condition in which changes in the status and power of the state will cause action *counter-balancing* other countries

⁶ Andrianto, 2018.

⁷ Hamka Hendra Noer, "PERANG DAN KEAMANAN DALAM TINJAUAN TEORI NEOREALISME DAN INSTITUSIONALISME," *INDEPENDEN: Jurnal Politik Indonesia dan Global* 3, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.24853/independen.3.1.25-36>.

⁸ Tawakal , 2022.

to prevent expansion and achieve an equilibrium. *Balance of Power* is a concept of Neorealism thought. According to Mearsheimer “*Balance of Power In World History*” By Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little and William C. Wohlforth, great powers will strive constantly to maintain their hegemony in the world. The efforts of these countries to maintain their hegemony are carried out by balancing the power of these countries against each other. They compete with each other so as not to fall behind, so that equilibrium will be achieved.⁹

But the consequences given by the concept *Balance of Power* This is the existence of *Arms Race* or an arms race. *Arms Race* Or an arms race is defined as a competitive and continuous effort (militarily) carried out by two or more countries that have the ability (capability) to make more weapons and stronger than others.

In his book *The Theory of International Politics*, Kennet Watz argues that *Balance of Power* Tend to form patterns, whether a country aims to truly achieve equilibrium or aims to achieve universal dominance. According to T. V. Paul *Balance of Power* basically divided into 3 types, that is *Hard Balancing*, *soft balancing* and *asymmetry balancing*.

(1) *Hard balancing* is a strategy aimed at countries involved in conflicts and competition between countries on the same side. In this case, the way to balance the opposing forces is to form or renew military and political alliances aimed at enhancing their military capabilities, as well as creating diplomatic relations that can support their various security interests, this concept is fundamental in the perspective of realism in the *balance of power system*.

(2) *Soft balancing* is a means intended for countries that lack a similar understanding of common security, but formal alliances are still needed in order to balance the power of hegemony. But usually the alliances formed are brief and carried out only to react to the threat of increasing hegemony. The concept is based on limited military cooperation, specialized cooperative practices and the establishment of temporary regional or international institutions. The policies carried out in this concept usually begin to occur when competition and threats become intense.

(3) *Asymmetry balancing* is a means intended for states to balance threats coming from subnational actors such as terrorists and other armed groups. But this concept can also refer

⁹ D.A. Norris, “Neorealism and the European Union Balance of Power in the Post-Cold War Era,” *Science*, no. March (2002).

to the opposite position, where subnational actors seek to oppose the state and balance its power with state domination.

Balance of power It is a discourse that is often debated for its effectiveness and relevance. However, the purpose of balancing itself is to contain the power of hegemony by means of systematic balancing of forces.

C. METHODS

The type of research used by the author here is qualitative descriptive, through a case study approach. The data source used refers to secondary data, by taking sources from various scientific researches, journals, books and information from various online media. In analyzing the data using a review of neorealism with a balance of power discourse approach, *to then describe how then North Korea's nuclear proliferation policy strategy has an influence on the balance of power.*

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Korea (now called North Korea) in 1948, the country has been governed by three generations consisting of; Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong Un. North Korea maintained its 'socialist' ideology even after the Cold War, the power of the Kim il-sung regime was successfully passed to the Kim Jong-il government from 1994-2011 and then to the Kim Jong-un government from 2011-present (Delury, 2022).

North Korea is a country known for its nuclear policy. The North Korean nuclear issue rose to international prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With the end of their Cold War alliance relationship, As well as threats from other countries such as the United States, for the survival of the regime, North Korea seeks security through nuclear weapons. With the existence of nuclear weapons, it is expected to be used as an effort to *balance of power*. The existence of a *balance of power will lead to counter-balancing actions* of other countries to prevent expansion and achieve an equilibrium.

In the view of Neorealism, *balance of power* has at least 3 concepts, namely *hard balancing, soft balancing, and asymmetry balancing*.). *Hard balancing*, which is common among countries involved in intense competition or conflict, so they are constantly updating their military capabilities, 2). *Soft balancing*, which occurs when developing countries

generally have a limited understanding of security with each other to balance potentially threatening circumstances or increased power, and 3). *Asymmetric Balancing* refers to efforts by states to balance and indirect threats posed by subnational actors such as terrorist groups.

Referring to these three concepts, the nuclear proliferation used by North Korea is one form of *their Hard Balancing* . With the policy of nuclear proliferation it is used to achieve balance as well as to prevent the dominance of one superpower in the international system.

Dynamics of North Korea's Nuclear Proliferation, World Influence, Response

Kenneth Waltz in his article entitled "*The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*" became an influential argument in nuclear proliferation policy. Waltz in his article stated that the proliferation of nuclear weapons in various countries would cause stability / *balance of power*, not nuclear war that was discussed before. The argument put forward by Waltz stems from the assumption that the possession of nuclear weapons of a country will increase the cost ¹⁰of war. The increase in *the cost of war* is caused by nuclear weapons that cause high *deterrence* effects and good survivability. Even with a small amount, nuclear weapons will provide massive destructive power. Therefore, Waltz said that nuclear weapons will help a country achieve the ideal of *deterrence*. ¹¹

Nuclear weapons are seen as a very powerful means of defense and very difficult to conquer. the defensive or defensive capabilities possessed by nuclear weapons can also increase the *cost of war*. Nuclear weapons present defenses that are very difficult to conquer, with this then lowering the probability of an attack that another country will perform. The enemy will understand that their attack will be futile. Nuclear brings the country to a "*defensive ideal*" position and eventually creates stability.

The above view regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons was later adopted by North Korea. North Korea believes that its conventional military might will lose out to its opponents, such as Japan, South Korea and of course the United States. Therefore, according to North Korea, nuclear weapons are the most ideal means of *deterrence* that can protect their regime in the long term.

¹⁰ Triantama , 2021.

¹¹ Triantama , 2021.

North Korea began to actively engage in nuclear research programs in the 1950s, when it feared it would lag behind South Korea. In about 1956, North Korea began a treaty with the Soviet Union on the peaceful use of signed nuclear energy. Under this agreement, North Korea began sending its scientists and technicians to the Soviet Union for training in the Moscow program. But unfortunately their technology is not advanced enough to produce nuclear weapons without the help of other countries. Finally, in 1965 North Korea agreed to a peace-building program with the Soviet Union to build nuclear infrastructure. The Soviet Union then decided to set up a nuclear reactor at Yongbyong, which would later become the center of concern for the United States.

In determining its nuclear weapons policy, North Korea relies on Juche ideology. Ideology means that North Korea has the right to self-determination, as well as regardless of the influence of other countries. In support of their development of nuclear weapons, North Korea continues to conduct a series of tests. North Korea has conducted at least six tests from 2006 to 2021. The first test took place on October 9, 2006, then the second on May 25, 2009, the third on February 12, 2013, the fourth on January 6, 2016, the fifth on September 9, 2016 and the last nuclear test on September 3, 2017.¹²

The first nuclear explosive test was conducted on October 9, 2006 in underground tunnels dug into a remote mountainous site called Punggye-ri, in northeastern North Korea. The nuclear explosive device is assumed to use plutonium sourced from North Korea's nuclear facility at Yongbyon. Using an underground system, its power was estimated at only about 0.5 KT, very far behind because the average explosion produced by major countries at that time ranged from around 20-60 KT. Still, the nuclear test drew strong reactions from various countries, because North Korea had violated the agreement as an NPT country. Then on October 14, 2006 the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), decided on military and economic sanctions against North Korea. The five permanent members of the UNSC, namely the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom and France, declared the sanctions contained in UNSC Resolution 1718 intended to punish the North Korean regime.

The second nuclear explosive test was conducted on May 25, 2009 at Mantapsan around Punggyri which was the site of the first nuclear test. The test was also carried out in

¹² Adam, "Analisis Strategi Nuklir Korea Utara Pasca Perang Dingin: Pengaruh Proliferasi Nuklir Korea Utara Terhadap Stabilitas Keamanan Asia Timur."

an underground site. The second test sends a message that North Korea is capable of making intermediate-level warheads. The USGS, in a statement, released data that the test caused a 4.7-magnitude earthquake in the Kilju area of the northeast of the country. The resulting explosion is estimated to produce two to eight KT explosions. In the end, this second nuclear explosive test was almost universally condemned by the international community as the UNSC adopted resolution 1874, which led to further economic sanctions against North Korea and authorized UN member states to inspect the country's cargo and destroy any material related to the nuclear program.¹³

The third nuclear explosive test was conducted on February 25, 2013, this test was the first test under Kim Jong Un. The third test was among the largest of any previous test, which experts said the nuclear force detonated reached six to seven KT. It is still unclear whether the explosion was nuclear or a conventional explosion designed to resemble a nuclear explosion. In the two days since the blast, investigators from Japan, South Korea and China have failed to detect any radiation. However, Pyongyang itself says it is using miniaturized, lightweight nuclear devices with far greater explosive power than before. Experts from Japan, South Korea and the United States at the time noted the tremors generated. In response to the third explosive test, South Korea raised its military alert status and Japan immediately held an emergency meeting with the United Nations.

In the same year, precisely on January 6, 2016 the fourth experiment was carried out at the Punggryi nuclear test site underground. In this fourth test, the nuclear force was detonated to 10 KT. In addition, it announced that the regime successfully conducted a hydrogen bomb test, which the government described as a total success and called it a form of self-defense against the United States. From this hydrogen bomb test, Japanese and North Korean authorities compactly estimated it produced a force of up to 100 KT, or equal to 1,000 tons of TNT explosions (1). This hydrogen bomb is certainly also strongly condemned by various countries.

The fifth nuclear explosive test was conducted on 9 September 2016 at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site, located about 50 km before; ah northwest of the city of Kilju. The test drew widespread condemnation, with the United Nations saying North Korea had been hit by five rounds of sanctions since its first test. Thought to be the strongest nuclear test North Korea

¹³ (Kristensen & Korda, 2022)

has ever conducted, some experts say its warhead force reached 10 KT or more. What drew the attention of international observers of this fifth test was a statement from North Korea's Institute of Nuclear Weapons, which stated that the test could eventually confirm a nuclear warhead that has been standardized to be mounted on ballistic rockets (Mariani 2017).

North Korea's sixth nuclear explosive test was conducted on September 3, 2017, during which North Korea announced that the test was a hydrogen bomb successfully placed on an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The explosive power of the nuclear bomb is at least five times greater than previous tests. The nuclear test explosion in 2017 was the largest estimated explosion.

Briefly the development of North Korea's nuclear proliferation we present in the following table.

Trial Date	Leader	Activity	International/UN Response
October 9, 2006	Kim Il-Sung	North Korea launches Daepong-2 long-range missile as its first test	- The UN Security Council passed a resolution condemning missile launches against North Korea. - 24 financial institutions in the world including Chinese banks stopped transactions with Korea.
May 25th, 2009	Kim Il-Sung	North Korea conducts 2nd nuclear test	- The UN Security Council passed resolution 1874 to impose sanctions on North Korea.
February 25, 2013	Kim Jong Un	North Korea conducts 3rd nuclear test	- The UN security council adopted Resolution 2094, which massively expanded the scope of sanctions for North Korea.
January 6, 2016	Kim Jong Un	North Korea conducts 4th nuclear test and claims nuclear bomb test was successful	- UN Resolution 2270 to impose tough sanctions on North Korea. - UN Security Council takes response to North Korea's 4th nuclear and long-range rocket tests
September 9, 2016	Kim Jong Un	North Korea conducted its 5th nuclear test, which was assumed to have	- The U.N. Security Council strongly protested the nuclear test, which seriously violated U.N. resolutions.

		an explosive power of 10 KT.	- UN Passes Resolution 231 to impose new sanctions in the form of restrictions on coal exports, etc.
September 3, 2017	Kim Jong Un	North Korea conducted its 6th test, which became the most devastating in its history.	- The U.N. security council caught a cue that sanctions alone would not be enough to halt North Korea's nuclear ambitions, after its sixth test.

North Korea has made technological advances in its nuclear weapons program through six recorded nuclear tests to date. As long as its nuclear capabilities increase, North Korea also increases its deterrence strategy. Nuclear deterrence strategy usually deals with how to then use threats involving nuclear weapons on the military and diplomatic planes,¹⁴

North Korea's Nukli Proliferation in International Stability

North Korea's development of nuclear weapons is based on fear of threats from foreign countries, especially those in the East Asian region, that carry out military build-up. As is known that the United States of America and its allies in the east Asian region have immediately imposed sanctions for a long time, resulting in serious economic problems that are still experienced by North Korea. Of course, this has angered Pyongyang at the sanctions that have been imposed on it and this is one of the causes behind the nuclear test that seems to provide new resistance.

By possessing nuclear weapons, North Korea is trying to fill the shortage of conventional weapons capabilities. While the political reason is more because it is based on the interest to increase *bargaining position* at the international level. This has to do with the international community's tough stance on North Korea. Nuclear weapons are used to pressure the international community to involve North Korea in international diplomacy and to advance its interests, such as lifting international financial sanctions.

North Korea's nuclear program has provided a flexible support for Kim Jong Il to maintain his regime. North Korea is not satisfied with its agreements with the United States, even North Korea views the policy of the United States as hostile and intends to bring down the North Korean regime (). Internal and external factors make North Korea feel the need to

¹⁴ Adam, "Analisis Strategi Nuklir Korea Utara Pasca Perang Dingin: Pengaruh Proliferasi Nuklir Korea Utara Terhadap Stabilitas Keamanan Asia Timur."

continue to increase its military power and develop nuclear weapons, but this has made security in the East Asian region uncertain. Each country feels the need to defend itself from outside threats. This makes the East Asian region more hostile than friendly.¹⁵

The issue of North Korea's nuclear proliferation will be a major concern for the security of the East Asian region going forward. It is not surprising, then, that major figures in the East Asian region, especially Japan and South Korea, have stated that the main issue for Asian countries is not how to disarm, but rather how to coexist with nuclear-armed North Korea. In an anarchist international system, stability is achieved through a *balance of power*. The balance presented here is very dynamic, which can change in line with changes that develop at the national and international levels. However, what is certain is that eventually a new balance will be created, whether through peace or violence (war). In the case of North Korea's nuclear, the balance of power in East Asia is dynamic. One security policy carried out by one country will affect other countries so that suspicion continues to arise and color the relationship between one country and another. And if suspicion continues to rise, it is not impossible that the use of military force or war will be created in the East Asian region.

E. CONCLUSION

North Korea is a country known for its nuclear issue. In order to maintain the survival of the regime, and to survive the anarchy international system, North Korea massively proliferated nuclear weapons. This was realized by the establishment of the first nuclear infrastructure in 1965, followed later by six tests from 2006-2017. This nuclear test then gave a lot of responses in the form of condemnation from countries in the world. Various countries impose sanctions. To North Korea. However, North Korea continues to carry out its policy regarding nuclear weapons. To respond to this phenomenon, researchers analyzed how North Korea's influence in its nuclear proliferation for international stability using the theory of *balance of power* by Kennet waltz. *Balance of Power* is basically divided into 3 types, namely *hard balancing*, *soft balancing*, and *asymmetry balancing*. In the proliferation of nuclear weapons North Korea is included in *hard balancing*. *Hard balancing* Using nuclear weapons is considered most appropriate in maintaining the regime and in achieving stability. Internal and external factors make North Korea feel the need to continue to increase

¹⁵ Samuel S. Kim, "North Korea's nuclear strategy and the interface between international and domestic politics," *Asian Perspective* 34, no. 1 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2010.0032>.

its military power and develop nuclear weapons, even though it makes its east Asian neighbors uncertain. The issue of North Korea's nuclear proliferation will be a major concern for the security of the East Asian region going forward. So it is not surprising that countries in the East Asian region, especially Japan and South Korea, have stated that the main issue for countries in Asia is not how to disarm, but rather focused on how to coexist with nuclear-armed North Korea. thus through an anarchist international system, balance / stability will be established with the existence of a balance *of power*.

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