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## TRUMP POLICY: NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENTS IN AN HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Nuryuana Dwi Wulandari<sup>1</sup>, Rendi Marta Agung<sup>2</sup>

Departement of History Education, Faculty of Education and Social Science, IKIP PGRI Wates, Wates, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

Departement of History Education, Faculty of Teacher and Education Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Purwokerto, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>

[nuryuanadwiwulandari@ipw.ac.id](mailto:nuryuanadwiwulandari@ipw.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [rendimartaagung@ump.ac.id](mailto:rendimartaagung@ump.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract

North Korea is a country located in the East Asia region. North Korea is one of the countries that is developing nuclear. The development of nuclear power has become a problem of security stability in the East Asia region and its surroundings, causing strong criticism from several countries such as the United States and even the UN Security Council. The purpose of this study is to find out 1) The relationship between North Korea and the United States in history; 2) The policies of the United States government before Trump; 3) The policies of the Trump government to stabilize the East Asia region. This study uses a historical approach to literature study. The results of the research discussion 1) North Korea is a country that was formed as a result of World War II. The Korean War sparked because of the dispute between the United States (South Korea) and the Soviet Union (North Korea) there was no peace but the two countries made a ceasefire agreement; 2) Before Trump became president, previous presidents had policies to reduce the nuclear power owned by North Korea such as President Clinton with the agreed framework, President George W Bush with the Six-Party Talks, President Barack Obama with "Strategic Patience"; 3) During the Donald Trump administration, the policy through Trump's harsh criticism speech to North Korea, Maximum pressure and high-level diplomacy became one of the policies issued by Trump. In addition, Trump also conducted High-Level Diplomacy Trump met directly with the North Korean government Kim Jong-un to reduce North Korea's nuclear.

**Key words:** *North Korea, United States, Maximum pressure, Donald Trump*

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\*Corresponding author:  
[nuryuanadwiwulandari@ipw.ac.id](mailto:nuryuanadwiwulandari@ipw.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

North Korea is one of the countries that has attracted world attention. This country in the East Asia region has ambitions for nuclear development. Nuclear development has been a serious problem in security stability in the East Asia region for 20 years. In addition to endangering the East Asia region, nuclear weapons also endanger countries outside the region, such as Australia, the Middle East, the Asia Pacific region and Europe. This situation makes the United States a superpower to play it.

The conflict between North Korea and the United States is prolonged. The conflict between North Korea and the United States began at the end of World War II (Siswoyo, 2020). The conflict involved the Soviet Union and Japan. The Soviet Union began fighting Japan in August 1945 and occupied the North Korean region, but due to the chaotic state of the Japanese city due to the atomic bombing by the Japanese allies, it finally did not agree to World War II. The announcement of Japan's surrender in World War II was announced by the Emperor of Japan via a radio speech. After Japan's surrender in World War II brought a breath of fresh air to the Soviet Union and its allies, the Allied countries had the freedom to control countries under Japanese colonization, one of which was Korea. After Japan's surrender, Korea was divided into two parts, namely North Korea which was controlled by the Soviet Union and South Korea by the United States. Because the North Korean army under the command of the Soviet Union had crossed the boundaries set by the two great countries.

Although in the 21st century, the Soviet Union has collapsed, the conflict has not ended. The United States has a strong influence in geopolitics, it is hoped that it will be able to stop nuclear and stabilize the situation in the East Asia region. This is because North Korea often carries out nuclear updates and tests which are increasingly having greater explosive power and greater impact. Based on data obtained from previous research, North Korea has conducted nuclear tests six times. The first test was October 9, 2006, with a low power of only 0.5kt, this explosion could not destroy Seoul National University (Robert L. Gallucci. 2021). In the second test on May 25, 2009, the core power of the explosion increased to 3-4kt (Toby & Jina, 2023). According to the third nuclear explosion test, conducted on February 12, 2013, the core

power was 6~7kt. This test resulted in higher results because the material used was different in the third test using plutonium, the government assumed that highly enriched uranium was used in this test. In the fourth and fifth tests in 2016 and the sixth test in 2017, the number of nuclear tests continued to increase and their power increased compared to previous tests in the previous two years. On April 16, 2022, nuclear weapons were proclaimed by the government (Matt, 2022).

The test conducted by North Korea has strained diplomatic relations with countries around the region, many countries have condemned the action, one of which is China. In its mass media, China strongly condemned the nuclear test conducted by North Korea. Even China will give unilateral punishment to North Korea (Cheng, 2013). After the third launch attempt in 2013. China no longer provides diplomatic support to North Korea in Resolution 2094 submitted by the UN Security Council due to North Korea's third nuclear test (Isnaini Hanura, Utomo, 2013).

North Korea's nuclear must be immediately suppressed, one country that is able to suppress it is the United States. The United States has a strong influence in geopolitics and is expected to be able to suppress the creation of nuclear technology and stabilize the situation in the East Asia region. Based on the background that has been described by the researcher, the researcher is interested in examining the relationship between North Korea and the United States which is reviewed in terms of history, the United States Government Policy before Trump, Donald Trump's Policy in order to stabilize the East Asia region.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses library research. Library research is an activity related to collecting data and information through various literature, such as books, journals, archives, documents, scientific magazines, and various other written sources without being directly involved in the field. The steps of the library research are as follows: 1) determining the research topic; 2) identifying sources of information; 3) collecting literature; 4) reading and evaluating literature; 5) recording important information; 6) analyzing and synthesizing literature; 7) compiling a literature study framework; 8) writing and integrating literature studies; 9) revising and refining; 10) ensuring writing ethics (Zed, 2004). The sources used in this

study include

1) Memorandum of Understanding, Seoul, August 27, 1975. With participants President Park Chung Hee Senior Protocol Secretary, Choi Kwan-soo Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger Ambassador Richard L. Sneider. Noting that he had discussed the problem with President Ford, Secretary Schlesinger said that the U.S. attached extreme importance to the NPT. This entirely underscored the wisdom of the ROK adherence to the treaty which we warmly welcomed. The ROK action avoided a very serious political problem in the U.S. where major elements attached particular importance to the NPT. The Secretary stressed that the only thing that could undermine the political relationship between the U.S. and the ROK would be the Korean effort to acquire its own nuclear weapons.

2) Glennon, (1976), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Korea, Volume VII*. Department of State Washington. In the book there is the relationship of the United States with Korea. For example: the Soviet Representative's request that the delegation from the People's Republic of China be heard first was rejected by a vote of 8 to 1 (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), with 2 abstentions (India and Yugoslavia). Much of the meeting was devoted to a lengthy statement by Ambassador Austin accusing the Chinese Communists of aggression in Korea, outlining the United States' policy in Korea and Formosa, reviewing the history of Sino-American relations, and asking questions of the Chinese delegation aimed at clarifying the number, organization, and composition of Chinese volunteers in Korea. He also questioned whether the People's Republic of China was prepared to comply with a key paragraph in the six-nation draft resolution calling on all countries and authorities to refrain from assisting North Korea.

3) Doubek, James (2019) *Trump Meets North Korea's Kim Jong Un And Says Nuclear Negotiations Will Resume*. NPR. President Trump met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for the third time on Sunday, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to step foot in North Korea before announcing that the two countries would look to revive stalled nuclear talks.

4) Barilleaux, R. J., & Kim, A. I. (1999). *Clinton, Korea, and Presidential Diplomacy*. *World Affs.*, 162, 29. The policies taken by

Clinton as the United States government in reducing North Korean nuclear include the agreed framework.

5) Kim, I. (2004). *A Comparative analysis of president Clinton and Bush's handling of the North Korean nuclear weapons program: Power and strategy*. *Pacific Focus*, 19(1), 69-106. In this regard, Clinton's actual efforts to resolve the issues surrounding the North's nuclear program appeared ambiguous and inconsistent. This led to the temporary suspension of the North's nuclear ambitions through an Agreed Framework. However, President Bush stuck to more of a hardnosed approach. He continues to demand a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling of the nuclear program first, before any provision of economic or humanitarian assistance is extended toward North Korea. Bush favors multilateral negotiations, which leads the DPRK to feel more isolated than before.

6) Schneider, J. (2010). *The change toward cooperation in the George W. Bush administration's nuclear nonproliferation policy toward North Korea* (Vol. 584). Peter Lang. In *The Change toward Cooperation in the George W. Bush Administration's Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy toward North Korea* (2010), Jonas Schneider analyzes the surprising policy shift by the Bush administration from confrontation to cooperation with North Korea following its first nuclear test in 2006. Challenging common explanations based on threat perception, domestic politics, or bureaucratic struggles, Schneider argues that the change was driven by a strategic reassessment within the administration—specifically, the belief that there was a genuine opportunity for diplomatic progress through the Six-Party Talks. The book offers a detailed study of internal U.S. decision-making processes, highlighting how perceptions, leadership, and institutional dynamics shaped the move toward engagement.

7) Cha, V. D. (2009). What do they really want?: Obama's North Korea conundrum. *The Washington Quarterly*, 32(4), 119-138. the strategic dilemma faced by the Obama administration regarding North Korea, questioning what Pyongyang truly seeks—deterrence, regime survival, or aid—and how Washington should respond. He frames North Korea as a rent-seeking authoritarian state, leveraging provocations (nuclear tests, missile

launches, military incidents) not out of irrationality, but as deliberate tactics to extract economic concessions, maintain regime stability, and assert its strategic value.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The North Korea and United States conflict is a series of conflicts resulting from World War II involving Japan and the Soviet Union. Japan surrendered to the Soviet Union in World War II due to the chaotic state of Japan due to the Atomic Bomb dropped by the allied countries on its administrative city, causing the paralysis of the Japanese state, so that the Emperor of Japan in his speech via radio surrendered unconditionally to the Soviet Union.

**Figure 1. The condition of Nagasaki City after the atomic bombing by the Allies.**



source:

<https://www.loc.gov/item/91482332/>

### North Korea and United States Relations Reviewed from History

North Korea and South Korea are countries that were formed due to the impact of World War II. Long before the war between Japan and the Soviet Union, Korea was a country under Japanese occupation. At the end of World War II between the Soviet Union and Japan, Japan finally surrendered in the war. Japan's surrender was announced directly by the Japanese emperor through a Japanese radio speech. In addition, Japan and the Allies also signed the San Francisco Peace Agreement or known as the Treaty of Peace with Japan (Triyanto, 2023). In the contents of the agreement, Japan surrendered all territories previously occupied by Japan to be handed over to the allies. Countries under Japanese rule include Taiwan, Korea, and other countries.

After the signing, the Allied countries were free to take the rights of the Japanese colonies. The country that was targeted by the country of Korea. The country of Korea was officially established as the Republic of Korea which was proclaimed by Syngman Rhee. The territory of Korea which has a strategic location in East Asia, between the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea, became a contested area, this is because the two seas are trade routes and have regional control, so that the country of Korea became a contest between the Soviet Union and the United States. This dispute found a middle ground by dividing Korea into two parts along the parallel. With the provision that the northern part was controlled by the Soviet Union by adopting a communist ideology and becoming the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the south was controlled by the United States with a capitalist ideology becoming the Republic of Korea. The difference in ideology was the beginning of the conflict that sparked tension. The tension increased because both claimed to be the legitimate government, causing war, the war was called the Korean War.

The Korean War took place from 1950 to 1953 (Pambudi, 2023). The war took place between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Korean War began on June 25, 1950 with the North Korean attack on South Korea under the leadership of Kim Il-sung, the attack aimed to reunite Korea with communist ideology. This attack succeeded in controlling the territory of South Korea. This situation made the United States not accept the attack, so the United States together with the UN sent troops to help South Korea with troops under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. Finally, MacArthur's troops managed to expel North Korea to Chinese territory.

However, at the end of 1950, China intervened in this war by sending troops to expel the UN from the South (Rustamana et al., 2024). In 1951 the war was no longer an attack between regions because the front lines were stable parallel, but from 1951 to 1953 there was a struggle for trenches. On July 27, 1953, the two sides signed an armistice agreement, which stopped the fighting but did not officially end the war. The Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) was established, separating the two countries.

**Figure 2. United States troops march towards Seoul during the Korean War, Sept. 1950.**



source: Barnard, William C. - J. & R.  
Lamb Studios

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016677810/>

### United States Government Policy Before Donald Trump

The United States has been approaching North Korea diplomatically for 25 years to make peace with South Korea and stop the nuclear program. However, the diplomatic approach has not yet found a bright spot. Here are the policies of the United States government as an effort to stop nuclear in North Korea.

#### 1. Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton was the president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He was the president of America for two terms. During his time as president, he made various policy efforts to suppress North Korean nuclear weapons.

Bill Clinton was the president of the United States from 1993 to 2001, he was the president of America with two terms of office. During his presidency, he made various policy efforts in order to reduce North Korean nuclear. Based on data obtained from the historical stage that. The United States has been involved in five major series of formal nuclear and missile negotiations with North Korea: the bilateral Agreed Framework (1994-2002), bilateral missile negotiations (1996-2000), the multilateral Six-Party Talks (2003-2009), the bilateral Leap Day Deal (2012), and the high-level meeting and exchange of letters between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (2018-2019). In general, the formulation of these negotiations is that North Korea stops, and in some cases deactivates, its nuclear or missile programs in exchange for economic and diplomatic

incentives, including promises to improve US-DPRK relations and an official cessation of the Korean War. The five diplomatic efforts resulted in agreements; Both—the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks—resulted in significant reductions in North Korea’s existing capabilities. Even those gains proved fleeting as both agreements ultimately collapsed.

During the Clinton administration, the United States implemented the bilateral Agreed Framework (1994–2002) aimed at denuclearizing North Korea. Meetings between the Clinton administration as the United States government and Kim Il-sung as the North Korean government were facilitated by Jimmy Carter. The meetings resulted in North Korea agreeing to freeze its plutonium production program with the disproportionate supply of light nuclear reactors, to be provided by the United States, and steps toward normalizing diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries. The basis of the Full text of the KEDO-DPRK Agreed Framework Agreement stipulates that North Korea will receive 500,000 metric tons of heavy fuel oil (HFO) annually during the construction of two light water reactors (LWRs), managed by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)—a consortium led by the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Between 1995 and 2002, the U.S. Congress appropriated more than \$400 million in energy-related assistance to North Korea through KEDO. The United States primarily financed the delivery of HFO and administrative costs of KEDO, while Japan and South Korea covered the bulk of the LWR construction costs. However, the idea of supplying nuclear power plants to North Korea was highly controversial in Congress, especially after Republicans gained control of the House in 1995. In 1998, Congress required the President to certify progress in nuclear and missile negotiations before approving funds for KEDO. The Clinton administration viewed this provision as detrimental to the Agreed Framework, and ongoing battles with Congress nearly resulted in blocking funding on several occasions.

The implementation of the agreement did not go smoothly, this was because both parties suspected each other. The United States suspected that North Korea continued to produce nuclear weapons in secret so that it was not known to the United States, in addition,

delays in the construction of light water reactors and fuel shipments from the United States and the Allies made relations between the two parties tense. The work agreement was not successful, even North Korea at the end of Clinton's term violated the agreement (Lestari et al., 2021).

## **2. George W Bush**

George Bush was the president-elect after Clinton. George Bush was not directly involved in the Korean War, but some of his policies were issued in order to reduce nuclear which endangered the stability of countries in East Asia. Bush initiated the formation of negotiations in order to reduce nuclear in North Korea because of the violations that Korea had committed in the Agreed Framework, in which North Korea secretly developed nuclear. The negotiations were the Six-Party Talks (Park, 2005). These negotiations involved countries in the East Asia Region as an effort to reduce North Korean nuclear.

The Six-Party Talks is a multilateral diplomatic forum held in 2003 involving six countries including North Korea, South Korea, China, the United States, Japan and Russia (Nabil, 2014). The objectives of the agreement include peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula; guaranteeing the security of North Korea in return for stopping its nuclear program; creating regional stability through multilateral cooperation. In (Grzelczyk, 2009) the implementation of the Six-Party Talks occurred for 6 times including:

1. The first round in August 2003 held in Beijing, in this round resulted in the importance of denuclearization
2. The second round in February 2004 in this round North Korea demanded security and diplomatic recognition from the United States.
3. The third round in June 2004 in this round discussed Economic incentives for North Korea, but in this round no joint agreement was reached.
4. The fourth round in 2005 in this round North Korea agreed to a joint statement to abandon all its nuclear weapons programs and return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). However, the implementation of the agreement was hampered by differences of opinion between the parties concerned.
5. The fifth round in 2006. the agreement stopped because North Korea conducted a nuclear test and this received criticism and sanctions from the UN Security Council.
6. The sixth round in 2007-2008. In this round, an agreement was reached where North Korea agreed to deactivate its nuclear reactors in exchange for energy and economic aid from these countries with the aim of achieving progress.

The Six-Party Talks ended for several major interrelated reasons. One of the main reasons was North Korea's nuclear weapons tests, first in 2006 and again in 2009. These actions sparked international condemnation and led the UN Security Council to impose new sanctions on North Korea. In response, in April 2009, North Korea officially withdrew from the talks and refused to return. In addition, no real progress was made during the talks because each party had different interests. The United States and Japan wanted North Korea to completely abandon its nuclear program, while China placed more emphasis on regional political stability. On the other hand, North Korea was often seen as only using the talks to obtain economic aid and time to strengthen its nuclear program. The differences in interests and lack of trust between the participating countries caused the talks to stagnate and eventually could not be continued. Thus, the Six-Party Talks ended without any results that truly resolved the North Korean nuclear issue.

## **3. Barack Obama**

President Barack Obama was the elected President of the United States who served from 2009 to 2017. Like previous American presidents, Obama also made a policy to reduce nuclear in North Korea. However, at the beginning of Obama's leadership, North Korea assumed that there would be cooperation, especially in the fields of economy and trade. This was motivated when Obama's campaign emphasized that there would be a change in policy from the previous president (Pyton, 2011). At the beginning of Obama's administration, he focused more on domestic issues because of the recession. However, pressure came from North Korea to readjust the policy that had been running previously regarding nuclear weapons in North Korea. This did not last long because North Korea carried out provocations including the Taepodong-2 missile test in April

2009 and the nuclear test in May 2009, which sparked international condemnation. The provocation showed that North Korea was still carrying out brinkmanship tactics - provoking a crisis to gain concessions.

In response, the Obama administration strengthened cooperation with its main allies, namely South Korea and Japan, and increased diplomatic pressure through the UN and China. Nevertheless, Obama continued to try to open the path of dialogue, both in a multilateral format through the Six-Party Talks and possibly bilaterally, as long as it remained within the multilateral framework. One of the key moments was former President Bill Clinton's visit to Pyongyang in August 2009 to secure the release of two detained American journalists. The visit, dubbed the "Clinton Effect," opened up new opportunities for dialogue, and even led to subsequent meetings that improved North Korea's relations with South Korea and encouraged cooperative steps, such as family reunification and opening the border to economic activity.

However, despite some diplomatic breakthroughs and Obama even receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in late 2009, North Korea policy still faces major challenges. North Korea has stubbornly refused to return to the Six-Party Talks and only wants to negotiate directly with the United States. On the other hand, the United States maintains that bilateral dialogue is only possible within a multilateral framework. In response to the stagnant situation, this article suggests that Obama take innovative approaches such as establishing a special research institute for Korean reunification studies, and conducting long-term cultural and scientific diplomacy to build trust. Obama's overall strategy in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue is an attempt to balance pressure and open diplomacy, although the results have not been fully able to penetrate North Korea's stubborn pattern (Kim, 2010).

#### **4. Donald Trump's Policy to Stabilize the East Asia Region**

Donald Trump or better known as Trump is the president of the United States from 2017 to 2021. The North Korean nuclear threat is still a major problem in world security. The United States as a superpower is expected to be able to reduce nuclear and re-stabilize the region in East Asia. The United States has an

important role because many countries in East Asia have relations with the United States, this cannot be separated from the previous history of the Korean War.

North Korea is one of the countries that develops nuclear weapons for war weapons. Nuclear development that occurred in North Korea has been going on since the Cold War between the Western and Eastern blocs, where in the Cold War the Western and Eastern blocs competed in technological progress. Nuclear development is very dangerous for countries in the East Asian region and disrupts world peace. The United States as a superpower is expected to be able to reduce the development of North Korean nuclear weapons. During Trump's leadership, various efforts were made to reduce North Korea's nuclear weapons, including through Trump's strong condemnation speech to North Korea, Maximum pressure and high-level diplomacy (Kim, 2020).

In his speech at the UN forum, Trump strongly criticized the North Korean government of Kim Jong-Un that North Korea would be completely destroyed and called Kim Jong-Un a little rocket man. In addition, Trump also mentioned that the United States also has a larger nuclear than North Korea. The speech was delivered by Trump after North Korea's nuclear test. In addition to the speech, the United States limited North Korea's room for movement, together with the UN, sanctions were imposed on North Korea. The sanctions are in the form of a ban on the export of coal, gold, oil and textiles. The ban aims to weaken the North Korean economy so that it cannot continue the nuclear.

Trump also carried out high-level diplomacy with the North Korean government. The meeting between Trump and Kim Jong-Un did not only happen once, the meeting discussed the nuclear being developed by North Korea. Diplomacy by meeting the President of North Korea has never happened before by presidents before Trump. Trump's first meeting with Kim Jong-Un was held in Singapore in 2018. In the meeting, an agreement was reached with the signing of both leaders of the United States and North Korea regarding denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. The second meeting took place in 2019 in Hanoi Vietnam at the meeting did not reach an agreement because the United States and North Korea had different

understandings regarding the sanctions imposed on North Korea. The third meeting took place in June 2019. At this meeting in North Korea, more precisely in the demilitarized zone. This third meeting was the first visit by the United States to North Korea.

**Figure 3. Donald Trump (President of the United States) met with Kim Jong-Un (President of North Korea) in the context of nuclear negotiations**



source:

<https://www.npr.org/2019/06/30/737365074/trump-to-meet-kim-jong-un-at-dmz>

During Trump's term as president of the United States, the biggest challenge was because North Korea through Kim Jong-Un stated that it would continue its nuclear program. Trump's overall policy is almost the same as the previous president, which distinguishes direct meetings between Trump and Kim Jong-Un to discuss the ongoing nuclear program. In addition, the United States visited the North Korean demilitarized zone, something that had never been done by previous American leaders.

## CONCLUSION

Based on a brief discussion, the researcher concluded that the core problem of nuclear technology being developed by North Korea. North Korea is developing nuclear technology, one of which is as a means of national defense, but if the nuclear technology is activated, it will have a huge impact on countries in the East Asia region (Japan, China, South Korea) and countries that cooperate with countries in the East Asia region, one of which is the United States. So that the world community does not condemn this. To stop the development of nuclear technology, the presidents who have served up to Trump have carried out various diplomacy.

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