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# **THE DEFENSIVE–OFFENSIVE POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF NORTH KOREA IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

**Aucky Adi Kurniawan**

International Relations, University of Muhammadiyah Malang  
Malang, East Java, Indonesia 65144  
[auckykurniawan021@webmail.umm.ac.id](mailto:auckykurniawan021@webmail.umm.ac.id)

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### **Abstract**

The study seeks to explain North Korea's political behavior that tends to act defensively and offensively which has often been represented as a dangerous country. Moreover, historically, the events of the Korean War that led to the breakup of Korea into two parts, the northern part that is associated with the Soviet Union and the southern part that is joined by the United States, makes the relationship between the two countries increasingly conflictual. Coupled with the formation of two axes of power since the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea is allied with its ideological one brother China, and South Korea is allied with the United States. The political escalation between the two countries continues to rise, resulting in the relationship of two becoming very conflictual, and because of that, the rivalry that is formed between the two countries raises various potential conflicts that couldn't be avoided. This research used the congruent method by used the balance of threat theory from Stephen Walt who argued that the state reacts to the perceived threat rather than power, and aims to balance it. The results found that North Korea's defensive - offensive actions were motivated by distrust of America-allied South Korea through several joint exercise programs on the peninsula that is considered a form of threat. Overall, the main argument of this research is the North Korea's defensive - offensive actions are determined by the attitudes of South Korea and its ally the United States.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Taking a closer look into the history of the foreign relation of North Korea, we all know that North Korea is a country that shuts itself off from the outside world. North Korea deepened its self-imposed isolation, but when we talk about the

military sector, North Korea is proud to introduce its nuclear weapons to the whole world. North Korea has been actively developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs since 2006. In his paper, Bruce Bennet explained since 1960, North Korea has been interested in nuclear

weapons when Kim Il Sung began harmonious relations with his main ally, the Soviet Union, as a method of soliciting support in the development of nuclear weapons. Moscow pushed North Korea to join the nuclear proliferation treaty which then barred North Korea from developing the nuclear program (Council On Foreign Relation, 2019) Despite the ban, the Yongbyon nuclear reactor was still running. Regional tensions began to be felt back in the 90s and it made North Korea became weaker on its commitments. The United States has suspicions about North Korea's nuclear development, quoted from the Nuclear Treaty Initiative, North Korea withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2003 (Bennett et al., 2021).

Suspicious between North Korea and the United States escalated when South Korea and America agreed to form a joint military exercise through the Mutual Defense Treaty security agreement (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The point of this cooperation in the security sector is the agenda for large-scale joint military exercises to enhance defense capabilities and prevent unintended adverse events. Hans Gunther Hilpert in his research explained from the point of view of South Korea and America, this is a precaution against potential threats from outside the region, particularly, North Korea. The increasing number of U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula, the ranks of warships, and physical exercises involving explosives are all provocative and could be a factor in regional instability when North Korea feels threatened and then does something to protect itself (Meisler, 2011).

In his research, Kelsey Davenport explained that the tensions in the East Asia region have increased over the years as a result of North Korea's offensive actions and all nuclear weapons tests carried out. But in 2018, North Korea's relations with countries in the East Asian region began to warm up. In June, Kim Jong Un and Trump held a meeting in Singapore and

resulted in a declaration that the leader would stop testing nuclear weapons. The measures to bring peace are not outlined in official legal documents. Pyongyang's state media also said the United States was renegeing on this commitment to cooperation. North Korea then no longer appreciates the betrayal of the United States and revisits the commitments they made with the United States. The dialogue led Kim Jong Un to show his frustration by conducted three short-range weapons tests and increased media attacks on senior U.S. policy and officials (Davenport, 2020)

This is very interesting to discuss because North Korea is currently suspected of being aggressive in the global political arena which often attracts controversy from the international community. This behavior inevitably creates negative perceptions of the international community towards North Korea, such as North Korea's move to conduct missile tests, to the development of nuclear weapons which is often considered a dangerous country. Whereas, in the context of the conflict between North Korea and South Korea, it couldn't be separated by the action-reaction clause. The significance of this research is that it is very important to know how the defensive-offensive actions are carried out by North Korea, which is currently often represented as a dangerous country, especially in a conceptual framework. The offensive behavior carried out by North Korea could be said to be a form of defense, and part of the defensive strategy on responding the South Korea's provocative behavior. It's also could be considered that it's normal if a country reacts due to the actions taken by South Korea and its allies, the United States which is considered to be a threat to North Korea's national security.

However, this study discusses about the defensive-offensive actions of North Korea which determined by the attitude of South Korea and its ally, the United States,

which will be analyzed using the balance of threat theory because the balance of threat theory looks more at what causes the state to show certain behavior which will be explained in the Result & Discussion section.

## **METHODS**

This study used a qualitative method by analyzed how North Korea's defensive-offensive behavior is considered as a form of reaction due to actions taken by South Korea and its ally the United States, which are considered to threaten national security is explained in a balance of threat theory. North Korea's offensive action is the dependent variable that depends on the independent variable, namely the potential threat from South Korea. Data were obtained through credible sources which consist; books, journals, news articles, and online media publications. The congruent method is the fittest method for data analysis for this research. The main point of the congruent method is to make it easier for researchers to choose a particular theory that is used to explain and predict the outcome of a case. The role of theory is as a bridge between the dependent variable and independent variable. This method is used to find and maintain consistency between cases and prescriptions based on certain theories. (O'Shaughnessy, 2007).

It's concluded that the events of the Korean War that led Korea to split into two parts, the northern part that is associated with the Soviet Union, and the southern part that is joined by the United States made the relationship between the two countries increasingly conflictual. The defensive-offensive political behavior shown by North Korea will be explained from the balance of threat theory, based on the North Korean perspective by explaining the basis of North Korea's offensive actions. Balance of threat theory is used because it departs from the main argument that North Korea's defensive - offensive actions are determined by South

Korea and its ally the United States. Furthermore, this study aims to explain North Korea's defensive-offensive behavior reaction due to actions taken by South Korea and its ally the United States.

## **Previous Research**

Research on North Korea is a popular topic among researchers. Previous researchers had often discussed North Korea as a threat, having a brutal and aggressive nature so it gives a negative image for the Juche adherents country. However, the specific topic from a North Korean point of view that considering South Korea as a threat is rare. A broad perspective is needed in various studies to find out the truth. North Korea's actions and policies towards its nuclear technology are considered extremely frontal and threaten regional stability. On the other hand, researchers should find out the reasons behind North Korea's actions. This is related to action-reaction because North Korea couldn't possibly do something offensive and defensive if there is nothing to encourage it to do so.

Gunther & Suh in their research entitled "South Korea: Caught In The Middle or Medicating From The Middle?" explained in general terms that South Korea is a puppet of the United States, and North Korea is a nuisance that endangers regional security because of its very risky nuclear test. By this research, North Korea considered America as the main threat because they cooperate with South Korea in the biggest joint military exercises in the world. The relationship and trust between north and south are getting worse. Gunther & Suh's research emphasized that South Korea acts as a mediator between North Korea and America so that bad relations between the two could be reduced (Hilpert & Meier, 2018). Hwang Jihwan described North Korea Behavior from a South Korean point of view. In his research, South Korea considers that North Korea has a stubborn attitude, especially military-first policies. In correlation with this

research, North Korea ignores the warning of other countries. This makes South Korea fear because of the close geographical proximity of the two countries and decades of less harmonious relations. The development of North Korea's nuclear technology is based on a sense of threat due to the South Korean and American military cooperation on large-scale joint military exercises. That sense of paranoia arose and made North Korea set a "shield" to protect itself. This method is very extreme because ballistic missiles were used, even though it is just a test (Hwang, 2015).

The study about North Korea Behavior in Nuclear Negotiations by Han Yongsup explains that it is difficult to persuade North Korea to negotiate on its nuclear policy. Similar to previous research, North Korea's stubbornness is the main problem. Every country that builds cooperation with North Korea should explain the points of the agreement in great detail so that there is no misinterpretation. Han also explained that North Korea is a smart country, detail-oriented and savvy in negotiations. In line with this research, the researcher will discuss North Korea's behavior which tends to be more cautious and paranoid about the policies of other countries in conflict with it (Han, 2000). Lucia Husenicova explained about North Korea's position that North Korea is described as nuclear power, has nuclear warheads, and likes to test intercontinental ballistic missiles along with submarine-to-air missiles. North Korea is very stubborn and persistent in its programs, not only for external but also internal reasons, related to the regime. In addition, there is a card that North Korea relies on and that is an official nuclear power that is beyond international scrutiny. This research led to the opinion that North Korea is crazy and selfish in making decisions. This study will refute the arguments of Lucia's research. There are many other things about North Korea that most people don't know, which North Korea is a unique

country, so other countries who want to deal with it must be good at diplomacy (Husenicova, 2018).

Denny Roy (2017) explained that North Korea is not as bad as they portray in the media. America emphasizes that the North Korean leader is insane, irrational, and very aggressive. Indeed, North Korea does not recognize liberalism, but Roy's research explained that the North Korean leader is open to ideological ideas from outside, that's why North Korea also has diplomatic partners and relations with many countries around the world. Historically, the Korean peninsula suffered during wars. America bombarded the north until it was destroyed. Plus in the current era, South Korea's economy is also 30 times bigger. This makes North Korea very insecure. Not paranoid, but that North Korea is terrified of the United States (U.S.) to what The U.S. did in the past. This study discusses the same topic, but this research focuses on North Korea's aggressiveness in its nuclear weapons policy.

The theme of North Korea Behavior from the perspective of other countries is common in the academic world. This research is different from research in general because, in the process of analysis, the researcher used a North Korean perspective with a focus on the political behavior of North Korea by using a balance of threat theory. This research used a different point of view that intended to enriching insights and expanding the point of view of other researchers regarding the political behavior of North Korea in the Korean Peninsula by analyzing and determining factors such as aggregate power, geography proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intention.

### **Balance of Threat Theory**

Balance of threat is a theory by Stephen Waltz, which in this theory he divides into two parts, namely 'Balance' and 'Bandwagoning' (Levy, 1999). Waltz

defined balancing as an action taken by a country in maintaining its position in the system and not to increase power.

Balance of power is seen by some as being akin to a law of nature; by others, as simply an outrage. Some view it as a guide for statesmen; others as a cloak that disguises their imperialist policies. Some believe that a balance of power is the best guarantee of the security of states and the peace of (Frankel & Waltz, 1980).

The balancing concept proposed by Waltz used threat factors that cause a country to want to ally with other countries. Balancing is assumed if one country to another builds an alliance and have the same goal against the country that they perceive as a threat to them. Balancing is carried out by countries that decide to make alliances with other countries to face the countries that they consider strong and pose a threat to them. This is done by countries to suppress the domination by one country so that the domination would not too strong to be faced. Waltz in his book reveals that:

..not only is balancing more common than bandwagoning but also that stranger the state, the greater is likely to be its tendency to balance or to ally itself with other states to cope with the threat posed by politically dominant power (Frankel & Waltz, 1980).

Then the second is bandwagoning, which assumed that if a country establishes cooperation with other countries, it's considered a threat because it has great power compared to countries that cooperate with that country.

Stephen Waltz divided the forms that could affect how big the threat or even exceed the threat (Frankel & Waltz, 1980), namely:

1. Aggregate power is all the resources owned in the military, technology, population, industry, and so on. Other countries will consider the power possessed by a country through the aspect of aggregate power which is considered likely to be a threat to countries whose power is under them.

In the case of North Korea, this country is far below South Korea military. South Korea has stronger support from many countries because almost all countries in the world implement a democratic system, or could be said to have the same ideology. Unlike North Korea, which only has two backups, China and Russia. Technologically, South Korea automatically has qualified military technology. This could be seen from the population of South Korea and the human resources in it. Different from North Korea with a population that is only half of the population of its neighbor country, this automatically makes the human resources to be deployed in the military sector not too much. So, it's a fact that North Korea considers South Korea as a real threat.

2. Geography proximity is a method used by a country to take into account the potential threats that will arise from the geographical distance or proximity of the area. The closer the territory between countries, the greater the potential threat that will occur. The Korean peninsula is one of the areas of conflict because the two countries pose a threat to each other. South Korea considers North Korea as a threat because of its offensive actions through nuclear tests. Meanwhile, North Korea considers South Korea a threat because North Korea has lost badly according to aggregate power.
3. Offensive capability is the ability of a country to carry out attacks against other countries. This happens because the actions they take are supported by the military power possessed by a country. Therefore, raise a sense of vigilance from other countries, which then allies one country and another. Both North and South Korea have strong backups. As explained in the first element that China and Russia are North Korea's main alliances, this makes North Korea more confident in

facing threats from the United States and South Korea. This is also due to the development of nuclear weapons in China and Russia.

4. Offensive intention is the assumption that the state will feel threatened by looking at other countries in terms of the level of offensiveness ability. Joint military exercises held by the United States and South Korea pose a threat to North Korea. North Korea considers America and South Korea to have bad intentions to attack North Korea early. This is one of the reasons why North Korea also acts offensively as a form of self-defense from threats from South Korea. North Korea's offensive actions have made the country's image not very good. On the other hand, this benefits North Korea because it discourages other countries from underestimating North Korea's military strength.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### South Korea's Potential Threat to North Korea

Security relations between North Korea and South Korea are based on preventing North Korea's nuclear development since the end of the Korean war in 1953. Meanwhile, South Korea has developed conventional forms of weapons and strengthened its alliance with the United States. The essence of South Korea's defense policy is its alliance with the United States based on the Mutual Defense Treaty (U.S. Departement of State, 2020). The point of this cooperation in the security sector is the agenda for large-scale joint military exercises to enhance the defense capabilities and prevent unintended adverse events.

Over the decades, several types of large-scale military exercises had been done. Starting in 1976, the two main exercises became the focus of South Korea and the United States. They called Foal Eagle and Ulchi Freedom Guardian-UFG which later changed their name to Ulchi Focus Lens in 2007. Another type of

exercise is named Ulchi Focus Lens. RSO&I (Reception, Staging, Onward-Movement & Integration) and it changed to Key Resolve. The joint training time is divided into several parts. First, since 2002, Key Resolve has been held simultaneously with Foal Eagle in early spring. Second, Ulchi Freedom Guardian was held in early autumn. The purpose of joint military exercises is to increase strength and preparedness from North Korean threats and aggression. It's also done to protect the security and stability of the region, especially the Korean Peninsula (Cronk, 2017).

The duration of Foal Eagle usually lasts up to two months and is currently one of the biggest joint military exercises in the world through the involvement of many countries and hundreds of thousands of armies and civilian personnel. Covering various types of exercises at sea, air, and land, this joint military exercise is considered very complex. Key Resolve is designed for training through modern computer simulations to evaluate personnel from all levels to deal with various scenarios. Similar to Key Resolve, Ulchi Freedom Guardian also uses computer technology for civilian elements, but still involves the navy, air force, and army. It makes this is the largest computer-based exercise in the world (D'Orazio, 2012). Along with the development of technology, various exercises and simulations have been converted into computer technology. In addition to saving the budget, this also able to reduce negative responses from neighboring countries because previously, this joint military exercise was considered provocative. This aspect of crisis management is the main focus and monitored directly by the United Nations Command in all exercises in the last decades.

South Korean soldiers and civilians make up the majority of those participating in the exercise. Most of the U.S. troops were stationed in South Korea before 2009

during Foal Eagle and Key Resolve. Then in 2010, Ulchi Freedom Guardian mobilized the soldiers. With this effect on the number of participants combined training. The United States always experiencing an increase in numbers. For example, in the 2015 exercises Foal Eagle and Key Resolve, the United States sent 12,300 personnel, and that number increased in 2017 to 31,600 personnel. This change in the number of personnel is based on several factors such as the result of training objectives, modernization of capabilities, and development of features in the military system. The different training designs are a reflection of the security situation at any time, although this is unlikely as participating in these exercises usually requires several months of preparation (Katz 2015).

South Korea and the United States are at the helm of this joint military exercise. Sixteen other countries also participated under the United Nations Command (UNC), and these countries participated in the Korean war in 1950. The Multi-National Coordination Center (MNCC) was established in 2009 as an institution that facilitates and provides a platform for UNC to training on the distribution of aid and evacuation of South Korean civilians. Here, the alliance countries may transmit civilians, observers, or military personnel in joint exercises.

Internationally, the greatest enthusiasm was seen in the joint UFG military exercise which in 2014 involved 10 countries. For comparison in 2016 and 2017, Foal Eagle and Key Resolve brought together strong countries such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Norway, and New Zealand. These countries are also active participants. Unlike Thailand, Italy, Netherlands, and the Philippines which only had participated once or twice. The increased participation of many countries served as a stage for South Korea and the United States to show unity to defend and support

South Korea. Based on this commitment, the United States also brought in Japan as the oldest ally in the East Asia region. When Japan could not join, the United States proposed a trilateral joint exercise on the Korean peninsula involving South Korea, Japan, and the United States. In 2016, the first trilateral anti-missile exercise was conducted. This resulted in South Korean and Japanese relations also improving. The proof was in November 2017, when Seoul opposed Japan in participating in this joint exercise (U.S. Dept of Defense, 2017).

The objectives of this large-scale exercise are many when viewed from a military point of view. Field exercises such as Foal Eagle are conducted to hone the skills of personnel of all levels in the military unit, to train coordination with other unions, and to simulate realistic warfare as described by Clausewitz. It is impossible to do if only could be done through exercises and simulations on the computer. A large-scale joint exercise was also conducted to test the new weapons. In addition, joint exercises are also useful for forming alliances and increasing interoperability of armed forces personnel by enriching insights into tactics and interactions in various weapons systems and platforms (Victor, Na Young, & Andy, 2016).

Joint training is considered a good and quality tool for educating new personnel. Most personnel changes occurred within two or three years. This duration could be longer, as, in the case of South Korea, the duration could be twice as long. The main focus of UFG's training is on staff training procedures, command and coordination, and crisis management. This exercise also covers crisis management, the essence of which is to maintain a ceasefire condition through an integrated defense system to avoid armed conflict. The special thing about this UFG is when participants are encouraged to interact and synergize with political leaders (D'Orazio, 2012).

## North Korea's Reaction to Potential Threats from South Korea

Balancing and bandwagoning are used by countries that feel that there is a country they perceive as a threat to certain countries. So, by balancing or bandwagoning, the feeling of being threatened will be reduced and they feel they could maintain the security of their country. It is common knowledge that if a country experiences an increase in a threat, then the country will also try to improve its country's security (strength).

Aggregate power is the first element of the balance of threat theory. In this element, several sub-elements could be a potential threat to North Korea.

### 1. Population & GDP

South Korea, which has a population of 51,312,664 people and a per capita income of USD 1.63 trillion according to the world bank. It means South Korea's economy is 30 times bigger than North Korea (The World Bank, 2021)

### 2. Military Expenditures

South Korea has a military budget of 45.735 million U.S. Dollars in 2020. In this sector, North Korea is more superior because it has a budget of 3.6 billion U.S. Dollars, it's just that North Korea does not have many partners from superpower countries (Yonhap News, 2020). Meanwhile, South Korea has a very strong backup, the United States.

### 3. Technology

Technologically, South Korea is the country with the second-fastest technological development in the world after Germany (Ghosh, 2020). This is measured from the country's manufacturing, education level, to GDP. For North Korea, this is a potential threat and loophole for South Korea to attack North Korea.

The second point, geography proximity. The DMZ divides the Korean peninsula by separating North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) from South

Korea (Republic of Korea). The DMZ is 2.4 miles wide and centers on a demarcation line that extends for 151 miles between the Yellow Sea and the East Sea. Panmunjom is the "truce village" that straddles the border between North Korea and South Korea in the middle of the Demilitarized Zone that has split this peninsula since the Korean War ended in 1953 (Nemeth, 2021).

Moreover, the recent event shows that North Korea lays out a roadmap for its future nuclear development. When North Korea convened the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, thousands of delegates from all over the country gathered in Pyongyang. The event concluded with a parade featuring state-of-the-art missiles and military technology. This activity was also a form to warn South Korea and the United States on a large-scale joint military exercise. During the joint exercises, North Korea used to attack the United States and South Korea. Talking about the RSOI/Foal Eagle exercise in 2002, North Korea said it was an all-in-one war game aimed at implementing a pre-emptive strike to the north and risking a very dangerous war to seize the opportunity to provoke a nuclear war. The North Korean side said it would resolutely take self-defense measures to maintain the country's peace and stability. In a statement by the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, General Walter Sharp said that North Korea threatened to attack South Korean and American troops participating in the Key Resolve exercise (Korea U.S. Force, 2009).

Not only North Korea, but China also condemned the joint exercises between South Korea and the United States. This is a reflection that North Korea has offensive capability because it has China, which has a background as a country with a strong military, being the person behind the scenes who support North Korea. China shares the same view as North Korea in that this exercise is a provocative act that threatens regional stability. To make this



more serious, North Korea invited China and Russia to form their joint military exercises. China carried out the exercises at the same time when the United States sent additional personnel to South Korea as part of the Vigilant Ace exercise, an air defense exercise between South Korea and the United States in December 2017. This is China's commitment to maintaining regional stability and opportunity through joint exercises. In September 2017, the first exercises were carried out in the sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk with China. The Neutral State Oversight Commission or NNSC (consisting of Swedish and Swiss observers) was invited to observe the Americould and South Korean exercises and tasked with providing a confidential and independent report to the UNC Commander (Page, Solomon, & Barnes, 2010).

The overreaction shown by North Korea is a provocation from another country, especially China, which views the joint exercises as a threat. That means that North Korea knew that the exercise is an ordinary exercise, so North Korea doesn't need to over-respond. Joint drills involving military forces are often seen as increased tension in the region beyond normal limits due to provocative news by the media. The exercise got more attention from the world community which then prompted North Korea to do something bigger in response. Shooting drills, field drills, multi-team drills, and reactionary drills are the types of exercise that are most susceptible to increasing the intensity of tension. In addition, the increasing duration of the training and the number of participants could also be used as a factor to raise the tension in the region (Page et al., 2010).

Regarding the third point of offensive capability, North Korea has a lot of cooperation with China and Russia based on ideological similarities, especially in the military sector. Several joint military exercises were conducted in response to joint exercises held by South Korea and the United States. Offensive

intention indicated North Korea in the form of several attempts' missiles and various other types of nuclear weapons as a form of reaction of fear on potential threat given South Korea. So, it could be concluded that South Korea is a real threat to North Korea (L.Yoon, 2021).

In the era of the cold war, this was considered important to prevent another war on the Korean peninsula. Then, with the end of the cold war, tensions between the two Koreas are also expected to be reduced. The scale is lowered but the combined training continues. In 2008, The United States held a special joint exercise for the air forces of South Korea named Max Thunder. This joint exercise was also used as a reaction to North Korean aggression in response to the sinking of the Cheonan from South Korea in 2010 (D'Orazio, 2012). The media speculated that North Korea might be trying to play it safe on nuclear weapons testing by not sending long-range bombs on other strategic U.S. assets. Some people are worried that this is the wrong message from North Korea to South Korea. Even more worrying is the fact that North Korea's advanced nukes have the potential to undermine its alliance. North Korea never agrees to carry out exercises because they automatically need to respond by showing their overwhelming military might. It was evident during the joint exercises of North Korea and the United States, North Korea test-firing a ballistic missile from a submarine. Shortly after, North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test and claimed it was the largest to have a standard explosive charge. The weapons of mass destruction are mounted on its rockets. North Korea also launched long-range Scud missiles into the sea of Japan as a drill to attack US military bases (Hudson & Nakashima, 2021).

The North Korean government has long viewed military exercises as a security threat. In the Singapore pact, when the United States and North Korea promised each other to bring peace to the Korean

Peninsula through the denuclearization of new relations. Since 2017, North Korea hasn't launched a long-range weapon. Measures to bring peace are not outlined in official legal documents. Pyongyang's state media also said the United States was renegeing on this commitment to cooperation. North Korea then no longer appreciates the betrayal of the United States and revisits the commitments they made with the United States. It's no secret that Kim Jong Un always overreacts to what North Korea and the United States are doing. North Korea has condemned the delivery of two American stealth jets based in Seoul. North Korea feels it has no choice but to destroy the deadly weapon. Washington has been warned by Pyongyang for taking the wrong policy. The two agreed to restart discussions on nuclear at an important meeting between Trump and Kim Jong Un. North Korea intends to resume denuclearization, but it is up to the United States and South Korea about these joint military exercises. Talks between Washington and Pyongyang remain at a standstill after a summit in Vietnam abruptly ended without a deal (Davenport, 2020). When North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met former US President Donald Trump in Singapore in 2018, they reached an agreement to suspend large-scale joint American and South Korean military exercises in exchange for Kim Jong Un's approval of a long-term moratorium on nuclear missile tests. America has refrained from holding large-scale exercises. But when South Korea and America conducted a 10-day simulated war game in early March, it sparked Pyongyang's fury (Hudson & Nakashima, 2021).

The dialogue that took place that spring led Kim Jong Un to show his frustration by conducting three short-range weapons tests and increasing media attacks on senior US policy and officials. Historically, these joint South Korean and U.S. military exercises have been highly controversial. Trump himself stated that

the budget for these joint military exercises was so expensive that both sides agreed to shorten the duration of the exercises and reduce their scale. Furthermore, joint exercises are carried out in the form of computer simulations (Hu, 2017)

This is an offensive action which is the last point of the balance of threat theory. North Korea launched two cruise missiles in 2021. Four days later, North Korea also fired two short-range ballistic missiles. This action is a violation of the rules established by the UN Security Council. Scholars and researchers think that this is a signal for a new United States government lead by Joe Biden. Biden himself belittled this cruise missile test by calling it is nothing new, classic. This statement made North Korea think about increasing the dose. When Joe Biden gave his first speech as president, it was also when North Korea conducted a ballistic missile test. North Korea has tested this type of missile before, although it has been 11 months since its last short-range ballistic missile test. But things get more complicated when intelligence showed that Pyongyang also increasing its nuclear capabilities. However, with the development of nuclear weapons systems and warheads, researchers assume that North Korea will never dare to fire its nuclear weapons. Like previous American administrations, there has always been optimism that negotiations with a new president could result in a compromise (Yoon, 2011).

### **The Matter of Defensive-Offensive Action from The Perspective of South Korea and North Korea in The Korean Peninsula**

The alliance between South Korea and the United States comes to the point of this cooperation in the security sector becoming the agenda for large-scale joint military exercises to enhancing the defense capabilities and preventing unintended adverse events. Due to the conflictual

relations with North Korea, South Korea has developed conventional forms of weapons and strengthened its alliance with the United States. South Korea had been done military exercises from the small scale to the large scale since the relationship became a conflict for the two countries. Those military exercises that had been done by South Korea were to increase strength and the good preparation from the opponent, North Korea's threats and aggression.

The phrases 'practice makes perfect' suits South Korea perfectly since the country now has good potential to make other opponents get threatened by the country's strength. By the Foal Eagle as the biggest joint military exercise in the world that covers various types of exercises at sea, air, and land, this joint military exercise is considered very complex. Key Resolve is designed for training through modern computer simulations to evaluate personnel from all levels to deal with various scenarios and Ulchi Freedom Guardian also uses computer technology for civilian elements, but still involves the navy, air force, and army. It makes this is the largest computer-based exercise in the world. Those three exercises of the military of South Korea were an example of how strong the South Korean military was to protect and being prepared to fight anytime it needed. This is one reason South Korea has great potential to transmit military threats to its opponent. As we all know about South Korea's good relation with some powerful countries in the world, mentioned like the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Norway, and New Zealand, so that they could increase participation of many countries served as a stage for South Korea and the United States to show unity to defend and support South Korea. Based on this commitment, the United States also brought in Japan as the oldest ally in the East Asia region. When Japan could not join, the United States proposed a trilateral

joint exercise on the Korean peninsula involving South Korea, Japan, and the United States. By this moment, South Korea got immense support and backups from its alliances. This is also the other potential of South Korea's strength in its military. The joint exercises are also practiced by South Korea as a way to protect the country. The author could say that it's also useful for forming alliances and increasing interoperability of armed forces personnel by enriching insights into tactics and interactions in various weapons systems and platforms. Joint training is considered a good and quality tool for educating new personnel. This exercise also covers crisis management, the essence of which is to maintain a ceasefire condition through an integrated defense system to avoid armed conflict. On the different aspects of South Korea's potentials that could increase in threat to North Korea, such as population and GDP, military expenditures, and also technologies, South Korea is the winner if it comes to that point. Addressing all South Korea's potentials mentioned before, It concluded that South Korea has been practicing its military exercises over the years since the country is endangered by the opponent, North Korea. So, South Korea has been doing various military attempts to strengthen its military and protection of the country, and that results in its great threats to the opponent.

The alliance between South Korea and the United States comes to the point of this cooperation in the security sector becoming the agenda for large-scale joint military exercises to enhancing the defense capabilities and preventing unintended adverse events. Due to the conflictual relations with North Korea, South Korea has developed conventional forms of weapons and strengthened its alliance with the United States. South Korea had been done military exercises from the small scale to the large scale since the relationship became a conflict for the two countries. Those military exercises that

had been done by South Korea were to increase strength and the good preparation from the opponent, North Korea's threats and aggression.

The phrases 'practice makes perfect' suits South Korea perfectly since the country now has good potential to make other opponents get threatened by the country's strength. By the Foal Eagle as the biggest joint military exercise in the world that covers various types of exercises at sea, air, and land, this joint military exercise is considered very complex. Key Resolve is designed for training through modern computer simulations to evaluate personnel from all levels to deal with various scenarios and Ulchi Freedom Guardian also uses computer technology for civilian elements, but still involves the navy, air force, and army. It makes this is the largest computer-based exercise in the world. Those three exercises of the military of South Korea were an example of how strong the South Korean military was to protect and being prepared to fight anytime it needed. This is one reason South Korea has great potential to transmit military threats to its opponent. As seen on the history about South Korea's good relation with some powerful countries in the world, mentioned like the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Norway, and New Zealand, so that they could increase participation of many countries served as a stage for South Korea and the United States to show unity to defend and support South Korea. Based on this commitment, the United States also brought in Japan as the oldest ally in the East Asia region. When Japan could not join, the United States proposed a trilateral joint exercise on the Korean peninsula involving South Korea, Japan, and the United States. By this moment, South Korea got immense support and backups from its alliances. This is also the other potential of South Korea's strength in its military.

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South Korea as a way to protect the country. The author believes that it's also useful for forming alliances and increasing interoperability of armed forces personnel by enriching insights into tactics and interactions in various weapons systems and platforms. Joint training is considered a good and quality tool for educating new personnel. This exercise also covers crisis management, the essence of which is to maintain a ceasefire condition through an integrated defense system to avoid armed conflict. On the different aspects of South Korea's potentials that could increase in threat to North Korea, such as population and GDP, military expenditures, and also technologies, South Korea is the winner if it comes to that point. Addressing all South Korea's potentials mentioned before, it has been known that South Korea has been practicing its military exercises over the years since the country is endangered by its opponent, North Korea. So, South Korea has been doing various military attempts to strengthen its military and protection of the country, and that results in its great threats to the opponent.

The conflicts between North Korea and South Korea and their attempts to develop and increase the potentials of their country's securities are the result of its perception that they considered the attempt as a threat to each other country. So this is triggering each country so that they make the greatest efforts to maintain the security of their country too. In this case, all attempts that have been done by South Korea triggered North Korea and it resulted that North Korea reacting to the attempts. If South Korea allies with the United States then we have North Korea that allies with China and Russia. If we looking closer at their ideologies, North Korea has a lot of cooperation with China and Russia based on ideological similarities, especially in the military sector. That's why they are making alliances. North Korea has been held a joint military with China and Russia to build their strong alliances and protections.

This is a reflection that North Korea has offensive capability because it has China, which has a background as a country with a strong military, being the person behind the scenes who support North Korea. China shares the same view as North Korea in that this exercise is a provocative act that threatens regional stability.

All the initiation of military exercises designed by South Korea and America is an annual agenda as a precautionary measure and does not correlate with the latest issues on the Korean peninsula. North Korea views this action as an offensive measure and preparation for a surprise and covert attack. In response, North Korea frequently conducted missile tests at the same time as South Korean joint exercises. This was done as a North Korean threat to South Korea if the joint military exercises were not stopped immediately.

From the point of view of South Korea and America, this is a precaution against potential threats from outside the region, particularly North Korea. Logically, this joint exercise carries a high risk even though there is a good purpose behind it, especially if it is held in a location that got weak stability such as the Korean Peninsula. The increasing number of US troops on the Korean peninsula, the ranks of warships, and physical exercises involving explosives are all provocative and could be a factor in regional instability when North Korea feels threatened and then does something to protect itself.

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATION**

From all the explanations above, it could be concluded that the actions of a country could have implications for the defensive-offensive behavior of other countries because this will refer to the action-reaction scheme. In the case of North Korea and South Korea, the relationship between the two countries was not harmonious from the start due to

fundamental ideological differences. The mutual trust of the two countries is very concerning so that whatever the two countries do could become a potential threat to each other. The fact that South Korea is far superior to North Korea in the context of the balance of threats has also clouded their relationship. The biggest threat to North Korea is when South Korea holds several types of large-scale military exercises and makes it an annual routine. But from North Korea's point of view, the large-scale exercises have raised tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Not only North Korea, but China is also uncomfortable with this joint exercise and considers the joint exercise of South Korea and the United States as a provocative act that threatens regional stability. North Korea's reaction was to carry out nuclear weapons tests and joint military exercises conducted with China and Russia. This is considered very extreme because America has military bases in the East Asia region, precisely between the Korean and Japanese seas. But North Korea's way of giving this warning has paid off because in the end the duration of the joint U.S. - South Korean alliance exercises has been reduced to avoid a bigger conflict.

Reflecting on the case studies of North and South Korea, there is nothing wrong with taking preventive measures. Indonesia as the largest maritime country with a lot of natural resources that could become the target of other countries should do the same to maintain the security and tranquility of the country. But Indonesia doesn't need to have to be paranoid like North Korea. In addition, it's important to pay attention to emergency cases such as South China Sea conflict, that still ongoing could be a threat in the future. with China has built a military base in the disputed South China Sea. Moreover, China has violated the rules of the exclusive economic zone by claiming part of the Indonesian seas which could be a serious threat to Indonesia. By reflecting on that case. Concrete actions that have a

deterrent effect on the enemy are then allowed to be carried out.

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