

South Korea's Interests in THAAD Development Cooperation with the United States

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Abstract

Security is one of the main focuses of countries in the world. In achieving this, many countries cooperate or join alliances. South Korea has long joined the United States alliance because North Korea has weapons of destruction, which is the biggest threat to South Korea. One of the commitments the United States gives to its allies is to protect defence and security. When North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test in January 2016, South Korea and the United States worked together to build the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) in Seongju, South Korea. This research analyzes what interests South Korea wants to achieve in security cooperation with the United States. The theory of national interest and the concept of security dilemma is used to answer this problem. This research was arranged systematically using qualitative research methods. The research results show that South Korea's interests in THAAD development cooperation with the United States include 1)strengthening alliances with the United States, 2)North Korea's fourth nuclear test, which led to an imbalance of military power, and 3)the emergence of China as a threat to South Korea.

Keywords

security dilemma; national interest; THAAD



I. Introduction

Apart from China and Japan, South Korea is also one of the developed countries in East Asia. South Korea's position on the Korean Peninsula is also of good value. The Korean Peninsula is considered a strategic area in the international community; this is because the Korean Peninsula can accommodate the national interests of several major countries, such as the United States, China, Russia, and Japan, in balancing power in East Asia (Seung-Yoon & Mochtar, 2004). Even so, the division of territory on the Korean Peninsula into two parts, South Korea and North Korea, has contributed to the protracted conflict to this day. Various efforts and strategies have been carried out by all parties to resolve problems, but until now, a comprehensive solution has not been found. If this continues, the possibility of a war re-occurring will be even more significant because North Korea possesses nuclear weapons.

Intelligence services show that North Korea has 60 active nuclear weapons (CNN Indonesia, 2021). The nuclear weapons developed by North Korea would be used for joint research with the Soviet Union. However, now North Korea uses nuclear weapons as an instrument of diplomacy to achieve national interests in the international world and as a tool for propaganda that shows the existence of the communist regime (Purwono & Zuhri, 2010). North Korea conducted six nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, January and September 2016, and September 2017. In addition to posing a security threat to surrounding countries, nuclear tests also trigger an imbalance of military power between South and North Korea (Thalib, 2015).

As a result of this imbalance, South Korea continues to seek various ways to protect the territorial integrity and people, one of which is by establishing cooperation in the field of defense and security with the United States. The United States was chosen as a cooperation partner because South Korea had problems producing high-quality weapons independently, thus requiring other countries to help upgrade their weapons. Cooperation between the two countries has also existed for a long time. In fact, of the total weapons owned by South Korea, as much as 65% are imported from the United States, then 5% are produced through South Korea and the United States (Leofarhan & Azzqy, 2018).

An example of cooperation in defense and security established by the two countries is the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defense system in South Korea in 2016. THAAD is a defense system developed by Lockheed Martin, a US-owned defense equipment company (Manyin, 2016). Lockheed Martin has been developing this system since 1992. In 1999, Lockheed Martin finished developing two well-developed THAAD defense systems, and it is hoped that these systems will be deployed worldwide by 2012 (Michael, 2020). The function of the THAAD defense system is to block North Korean ballistic missiles while in the atmosphere by using a system that can be operated through the Model Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) (National Research Council, 2012).

Several previous studies that can help answer the main problems in this research. The author tries to see the point of view of previous research that has existed, then juxtaposes it with the latest research, which aims to make it easier for the author to find new data and facts related to the formulation of the problem that has been determined. Firstly, the research entitled "THAAD on the Korean Peninsula" written by the Institute for Security and Development Policy in 2017 explains that when the THAAD development was carried out, there were various pros and cons from several countries such as North Korea, China, and the United States. For South Korea and the United States, the construction of the THAAD defense system is indispensable for defense against North Korea's nuclear threat; in contrast, for China, the construction of the THAAD defense system is expected to affect relations between the two countries because China feels that the development is an extension of the United States' strategic interests (Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2017).

Secondly, the research entitled "China's Opposition to South Korea in the Procurement of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) in South Korea in 2016" by Habiburahman in 2017 explains the statement of attitude toward the procurement of the THAAD defense system in South Korea. This study also explains how China took steps to oppose this THAAD defense system. Through what was conveyed by the Chinese side, it was stated that the THAAD defense system would pose a threat to China's state security; besides that, the THAAD defense system was considered a good solution for security on the Korean Peninsula (Habiburahman & Pazli, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the cooperation in the development of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defense system between South Korea and the United States, as well as broaden the author's insight and also provide knowledge for the public and international relations scholars regarding the defense and security of a country. Therefore, this research will formulate the problem "What interests do South Korea want to achieve in cooperating with the development of the THAAD defense system with the United States?"

II. Review of Literature

The literature in this study contains explanations related to relevant concepts to help answer and analyze the problem formulation that the author has determined.

2.1 National Interest

National Interest is the basis of the state and also a very crucial variable in explaining the behavior of a country's foreign policy (Weldes, 1999). The presence of national interests is based on the desire to have a state and is also supported by power (Lake, 1981). National Interest places the state as the dominant actor, from George Washington to Hans Morgenthau. He always includes a national interest in the principal issues when discussing state and foreign policy (Edmunds, Gaskarth, & Porter, 2014). The National Interest is undoubtedly different from other countries because it is influenced by demographics, personality, culture, and history.

According to Jack C Plano and Roy Olton, the National Interest is the fundamental goal, the determining factor, and the guide for decision-makers in formulating the foreign interests of a country. In addition, the National Interest is also a very general and vital concept for the needs of the state. These elements are the survival of the nation and state, independence, territorial integrity, military security, and economic prosperity (Plano, 1982).

There are two properties possessed by the National Interest, namely material or essential and non-material or minor. Material or essential means that this Interest becomes a priority regarding a country's survival; that country's foreign policy also determines the values adopted. While non-material or minor means that the national Interest is not directly related to the state's existence, even though it is still being fought for through foreign policy (Nincic, 1999).

2.2 Security Dilemma

Development is a change towards improvement (Shah et al, 2020). The Security Dilemma's presence is influenced by globalization's development, especially in the military. The superiority of a country's military technology also determines its fate when dealing with other countries' military power (Roza, 2013). Because this raises a country's obligation to continue improving its military technological capabilities, and if possible, that country can hinder the development of other countries' military technology, which is felt to threaten the country's national security (Sattris, 2015).

The security dilemma is described as a condition in an anarchic environment, where an individual or group security is obtained through the accumulation of power that creates feelings of insecurity for individuals and other groups. John H. Herz first used the concept of Security Dilemma in 1950 in his writing entitled "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma." Herz is an influential writer and scholar (Herz, 1950). From this understanding, it is found that the Security Dilemma presents competition and conflict.

Meanwhile, according to Robert Jervis' Security Dilemma in an article entitled "Cooperation under Security Dilemma," there are many challenges and problems that must be faced in understanding the levels of the Security Dilemma. In the article, Jervis highlighted two factors driving the Security Dilemma: there is a difference between defensive and offensive weapons, and do they belong to defense or offense, which has an advantage? (Jervis, 1978). If defensive and offensive weapons could be distinguished, then a country in the world could quickly arm itself without threatening the security of its

neighbors. In addition, when the defense has an advantage over the breach, there is a significant increase in a country's security that reduces its neighbors' security.

III. Research Method

The preparation of this journal will be written systematically using qualitative research methods. The qualitative research method is based on the condition of natural objects, where the author is used as a critical instrument and in collecting data using triangulation techniques that emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2014). This method aims to produce a more detailed and complete explanation of the selected research topic. In comparison, the type of research used helps describe the various interests South Korea wants to achieve.

The primary data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, and the rest are additional data such as documents and others (Moleong, 2007). The data collection technique used by the author is through library research, searching online data, and documentaries. In this study, the sources of data collected by the authors are divided into two primary data sources obtained through the official government website and newspapers containing the results of interviews from related parties. Then secondary data sources are taken through various literature such as books, journals, articles, etc.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 An Overview of the Defense System Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)

During the administration of President Park Geun-Hye, South Korea and the United States had made defense policies aimed at increasing military strength that could counter the threat of North Korea; the defense policy carried out was to develop a missile defense system belonging to South Korea (kill chain system) and Korea Air. and Missile Defense (KAMD). The South Korean government designed the kill chain system to detect ballistic missile attacks and nuclear weapons launched by North Korea, and this system is also one of the deterrence strategies imposed by South Korea in dealing with North Korea (Kyudok, 2016). This defense policy did not last long because the United States seemed to dislike some of the decisions taken by South Korea in running the KAMD system. Finally, the United States offered the most advanced BMD, a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defence system that can prevent ballistic missiles while still in the atmosphere (Sukjoon, 2018).

The official start of the THAAD defense system deployment began in February 2016. The decision was taken after the attack carried out by North Korea during its fourth test run in January 2016. In July 2016, the official THAAD defense system development cooperation by South Korea and the United States (Judson, 2016). The THAAD defense system is planned to be built in Seongju, South Korea. In 2017 the United States Government, represented by the Department of Defense announced that the THAAD defence system was officially fully operational in South Korea (Rinna, 2018).

South Korea and the United States stated the THAAD defense system cooperation aims to protect South Korea and defend the United States military forces, allied forces, population centers, and critical infrastructure from North Korean short and medium-range attacks (Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2017). The THAAD defense system reportedly expands the existing multi-layered defense system in South Korea, in this case also including the Aegis missile system and the Patriot missile. THAAD's

estimated range for intercepting enemy missiles is about 200 kilometers. The THAAD defense system also has the same function as other missiles, in that the interceptor released can reach a maximum altitude of about 150 kilometers and a target speed of about 10,074 kilometers per hour (Michael, 2020). One battery of the THAAD defense system can counter a missile fired by an adversary; however, additional batteries are needed to protect South Korea from North Korean attacks significantly (Elleman & Zagurer Jr, 2016).

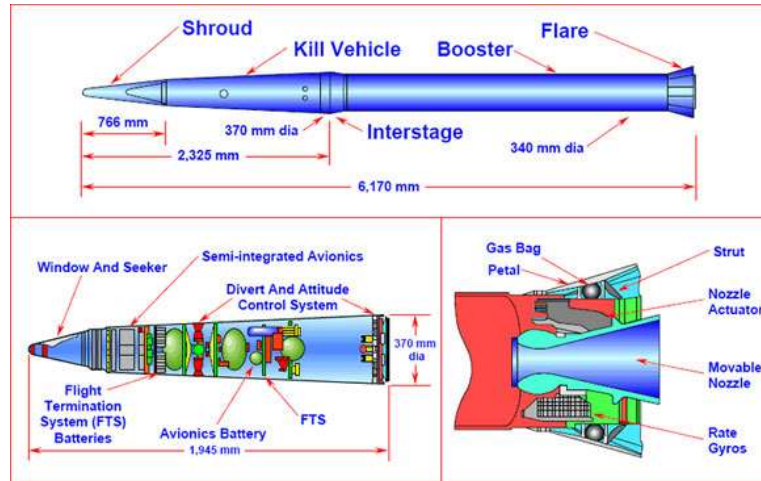


Figure 1. Illustration of missile components the THAAD defence system

The THAAD defense system consists of five main components such as,

- a. Launchers;
- b. Missiles;
- c. Fire control;
- d. The THAAD radar, and;
- e. Support equipment (Army Technology , 2017).

Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) launch works

1. Radar begins to detect an incoming threat;
2. After that, identify the intended target;
3. Start firing the interceptor coming from the launcher installed on the truck, and;
4. Launched interceptors use kinetic energy to destroy incoming missiles (BBC News, 2017).

4.2 South Korea's Interest in THAAD Development Cooperation with the United States

a. South Korea – United States Military and Security Alliance

The end of the cold war strengthens the alliance of countries in the world. The alliance concept presented by Stephen Walt states that forming alliances is a response to threats that aim to be self-sufficient. He added that the indicators that influence the state in making alliances are,

1. The state tends to want to balance other countries that are felt to be threatening, compared to bandwagoning against the source of the threat. Because future threats will be overcome by forming alliances;
2. The state makes alliances because it gains benefits in the security sector, and
3. Ideological similarities (Walt, 2014).

An alliance that still survives today is the alliance between the United States, Japan, and South Korea which has a relatively strong influence on politics in the Asia Pacific region. South Korea started a strategic alliance with the United States; since two countries signed Mutual Defence Treaty in October 1953 (Youngshik, 2016). This agreement aims to increase military strength to maintain security and defence on the Korean Peninsula, in addition to the agreement that the United States military personnel must maintain it on the Korean Peninsula and continue to commit to it in helping South Korea to defend against North Korean aggression (Jangho, Daewon, Jaekok, & Mason, 2020). The forms of strategic alliances that have been carried out by South Korea and the United States in protecting South Korea from North Korea's nuclear threat are

- a) Transfer of operational control (OPCON);
- b) Deployment of United States military personnel in South Korea;
- c) Imposition of economic sanctions on Korea North and,
- d) Cooperation in the development of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defense system (Amalia, 2020).

South Korea's interest in cooperating in developing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defense system with the United States to strengthen the military alliance between South Korea and the United States. In addition, strengthening the military alliance between the two countries has always been included in South Korea's foreign policy toward the United States. Because military alliance is effective in helping South Korea achieve interests in countering the threat to state sovereignty from North Korea; Within the alliance, there is a saying that "no daylight" between the United States and South Korea, meaning the alliance will continue to work against threats from North Korea and face various challenges on the Korean Peninsula, Asia Pacific, and beyond. Some experts argue that the alliance capability between South Korea and the United States is strong enough to withstand a North Korean invasion.

b. North Korea's Nuclear Test

North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatens the peace and security of countries in the world. During the development of its nuclear weapons, North Korea has often carried out a tradition of weapons tests aimed at making other countries wary and afraid of North Korea. North Korea conducted six missile and nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, January and September 2016, and September 2017. In July 2006, when Kim Jong-Il led North Korea, it was the first time North Korea conducted a test. Try firing a long-range missile at a tunnel located in Pungye-Ri. The test resulted in an explosion of about one kiloton and an earthquake measuring 4.2 on the Richter scale (SR) on the Korean Peninsula (Sindo News, 2017).

In 2009 North Korea conducted two nuclear tests again, on April 5 and May 25, 2009. In addition, North Korea also launched its long-range ballistic missile, Taepo-Dong 2, over Japan. However, this failed because the missile had not yet completed system testing or put a satellite into orbit (VOA Indonesia, 2006). Then on February 12, 2013, North Korea again carried out its nuclear test at Punggye-ri, a central facility in northeastern North Korea. In January 2016, North Korea again carried out its fourth nuclear test; this time, there were indications that the test resulted in the most significant and most substantial explosion between 10-30 kilotons, be, besides the bomb it used was a hydrogen bomb (BBC News, 2016). The three tests were acknowledged by North Korea as an atomic bomb tests. In February 2016, North Korea again launched the Kwangmyongsong No. 4 missile, which indicated that North Korea's ICBM development

was almost complete. This was reinforced by a speech by Kim Jong Un that preparations for the test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile had reached the final stage (Kiyong & Choongkoo, 2018).

The ongoing development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and the proliferation of sensitive technology by North Korea threaten international peace and security. In addition, North Korea's actions that have carried out nuclear tests are considered to have tarnished the values of the international non-proliferation agreement, as well as against two agreements, namely: the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and a comprehensive treaty on the prohibition of nuclear tests. The action also reacted to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which issued resolutions no 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), and 2094 (2013) to prohibit North Korea from conducting further nuclear tests far. For this reason, South Korea wants to cooperate in developing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defense system with the United States to protect its territory from North Korea's nuclear threat.

c. Security Dilemma: China as a Threat to South Korea

According to Liff and Ikenberry, East Asia is a region that has high competition due to security dilemma's between countries. What a country does to improve the security of its country can make other countries less secure. They also add that the rise of China as a new superpower is the cause of security dilemmas in the East Asian region (Liff & Ikenberry, 2014). Security cooperation and military alliances between South Korea and the United States affect the security order in the East Asia region but are effective in helping to reduce tensions between the two Koreas. The highest, however, comes from China's reaction to the United States involvement.

If South Korea and the United States are in an alliance, so are North Korea and China. Therefore, when South Korea and the United States decided the cooperation in the development of the THAAD defense system on the Korean Peninsula, China strongly opposed it because it considered that this cooperation was an extension of the United States missile defense system that would target China and North Korea (Sunwoo & Hyungjin, 2018). The increasing tension is interpreted as a "new cold war" between South Korea, the United States, and Japan against China, Russia, and North Korea (Esook, 2007). China's strategy on the Korean Peninsula is to maintain its status quo to prevent instability in the East Asia region from US intervention. Therefore, in developing North Korea's nuclear weapons, China plays an essential role in solving the North Korean nuclear problem through Six-Party Talks with the United States.

South Korea and the United States decided to build a THAAD defense system as a "new cold war" area. South Korea has had difficulty balancing relations with the United States and China. Even so, China has no ambition to start a conflict with the United States or seek to dissolve the military alliance between South Korea and the United States. China realizes that stable security in the East Asia region can be created depending on what role the United States plays. In addition, if the United States military alliance is dissolved, it will push back the arms race of countries in the Asia Pacific (Zhou, 2017). Therefore, when China strongly rejects cooperation in the development of the THAAD defense system, it cannot be interpreted as a form of an offensive strategy to replace the hegemonic power of the United States in East Asia but as a reaction to the natural political behavior of the United States (Christensen, 2012).

However, there are changes in the bilateral relationship between South Korea and China after the THAAD defense system development cooperation. Now the two countries are starting to reduce their sense of interdependence because China is making good use of

its superpower status by imposing economic sanctions so that South Korea suffers a massive loss of 0.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while China's losses are only 0.01% of GDP (Han & Chen, 2017).

V. Conclusion

Establishing cooperation in the security sector is the most crucial aspect of a sovereign state. The state is one of the most critical parts of the international world, and maintaining such defense and security cannot only be done nationally but must also be done internationally through cooperation. This is one of the driving forces for countries to carry out strategies with other countries because they have a national interest in the defense and security sector. South Korea stated that the resolution of security and peace in the Korean Peninsula region is its top priority. The tests conducted by North Korea posed a threat to South Korea and presented a military imbalance between the two countries, so South Korea agreed to agree with the United States to build a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) defense system in Seongju, South Korea.

South Korea and the United States said the THAAD defense system cooperation was aimed at protecting South Korea and defending the United States military forces, allied forces, population centers, and critical infrastructure from North Korean short and medium-range attacks. The function of the THAAD defense system is to block North Korean ballistic missiles while in the atmosphere by using a system that can be operated through the Model Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). The interests South Korea wants to achieve in the agreement include:

1. Strengthening alliances with the United States.
2. North Korea's fourth test causes a balance of military power
3. The emergence of China as a threat to South Korea

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