

## INTERPRETING JAPAN'S SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to interpret Japan's security interests in the Korean Peninsula using a qualitative research method and realism theory as the conceptual framework. During its empire periods, Japan was known for controlling several areas in Northeast Asia including Korea. Various inhumane treatment was carried out by Japan to the inhabitants of the Korean Peninsula for 35 years (1910-1945). But that treatment stopped after Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945. Korea, which was divided into two at that time, still hated Japan. But that hatred can be overcome by South Korea but not by North Korea. Some of the actions that endanger Japan were finally carried out by North Korea. Given that North Korea had lost the country that helped it, namely the Soviet Union, Pyongyang increased its behaviour that threatened Japan's security, such as using nuclear threats or launching ICBM over Japan's air territory. Therefore, Japan must implement security policies that can counter North Korea's threat. Such policies are postwar processing, security, economics, national sovereignty, and the safety of Japanese lives. This paper suggests that Japan must be able to defend itself from North Korean threats. Once safe, Japan can develop its economic interests. Then Japan can live and thrive and at the same time "expand" its leverage to the country that threatens it.*

**Keywords:** Japan, North Korea, Security Interests, Interpreting, Korean Peninsula

### INTRODUCTION

Northeast Asia is one of the regions with a high rate of population growth, a potent military, and the largest economy in the world (Clapper, 2014). This region includes nations like Japan, China, Taiwan, the Russian Far East, Mongolia, North Korea, and South Korea. According to Worldometer (2021), Global Fire Power (2021), and IMF (2021), this can be proven by the population of Northeast Asia around 1.6 billion people, has three countries ranked as the tenth largest military power in the world (China, Japan, and South Korea), and three countries are ranked in the top ten Gross

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Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the world. Thus, it can be concluded that stability and security must be maintained in the Northeast Asia region. By maintaining both, the countries in Northeast Asia can continue to exist, and to grow following their respective national interests. However, Northeast Asia is "disturbed" by the interests of several countries, such as North Korea and China. North Korea, or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is one of the countries that has nuclear weapons technology since it wants to become a strong and prosperous country with the "*Kangsongdaeguk*" policy (Cordesman et al., 2016).

Arguably, North Korea's national interests often conflict with other countries in the Northeast Asia region, especially Japan. Therefore, the attitude of Pyongyang which often undermines the stability and security of Northeast Asia by carrying out various nuclear tests, missile launches, military strengthening, and military parades threatens the stability and security in the region. Japan, as a neighbouring country to North Korea, separated by the Sea of Japan, perceives North Korea's behaviour as very threatening to its existence. Some of the threats from North Korea include the launching of the Hwasong-12 missile that passed through Japanese airspace, various missile launches that were carried out in the Sea of Japan, and the recent ballistic missile launch in early October (McCurry, 2017; BBC, 2021 & BBC, 2022). The behaviour of North Korea, which is very threatening to Japan, would certainly push Japan to form security interests, especially to be able to protect its existence and its people from the threat of North Korea's nuclear weapons.

This security interest is to maintain the survival of Japan therefore, North Korea has "pushed" Japan to continue to pay attention to its military development. Presently, stability is a priority for Japan, especially for the Korean Peninsula. Abe (2021) once mentioned that the Korean peninsula has become the key to Japan's national security. However, the Korean Peninsula is not only inhabited by North Korea but also shared by South Korea. Park (2011) asserted that South Korea has an interest in dealing with North Korea, seeing that the regional stability of Northeast Asia is the most important premise for Seoul's national interest. Additionally, Park (2021) also said because of its importance, even Northeast Asia regional stability has become South Korea's national identity in terms of security. Thus, these two countries, namely Japan and South Korea, have their respective interests in the Korean Peninsula. Consequently, two countries with different interests undeniably would intersect with one another.

This intersection can occur due to various events in the past, such as the existence of comfort women in Korea who were sexually enslaved to serve the Imperial Japanese army, the visit of various Japanese prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine, or even the feud of Dokdo Island for South Korea or Takeshima Island for Japan (Harold et al., 2021). The existence of these differences between the governments of Japan and South Korea would certainly lead to various conflicts if left unresolved. However, there is one common interest for Japan and South Korea in the Korean Peninsula when viewed from the context of North Korea's nuclear threat, and they share a common security concern. Unquestionably, this security concern has encouraged Japan, and South Korea, to shape its national interests in facing the "wild" nature of North Korea. Based on the background, this paper will analyse by interpreting Japan's security interest in the Korean Peninsula.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. The Realism theory is used in this paper to answer the research question. It is important to understand Japan's relationships with South Korea and North Korea before digging deeper into the discussion, as well as North Korea's endangerment towards Japan. Then, Japan's policy and security interests in the Korean peninsula will be the core of the discussion. The last section offers a conclusion.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The theory of realism is used to understand this study particularly, that surviving in the anarchic world without any help from other countries is a struggle. The struggle that is related to politics according to Morgenthau (1965) is known as the 'struggle for power'. He argued that said that politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever the ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining, and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action (Morgenthau, 1965).

In addition, the Realism Theory gets its explanation from Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes in Jackson and Sorensen (2013) stated that the natural state of humans brings them into a permanent state of war where humans will always live in constant risk and nobody can be confident about their security and survival for any reasonable length of time. In addition, Oakeshott (1975) explained Hobbes also stated that humans are forced to work together because of the fear of being hurt or killed by their neighbours. Thus, humans cooperate because they are civilized by the fear of death. Hobbes also explained that humans, whose lives are constantly in fear and insecurity, are shaping the nature of war of all against all.

Seeing the basic nature of human beings which is very vulnerable and fragile due to constant fear of others that would hurt or kill them, that is what brings the country, which contains humans who have these basic characteristics, to have the same nature. Jackson and Sorensen (2013) also said that countries constantly see other countries that will hurt them, thus bringing each country to live under constant threat of injury and fear of death. In short, a country, which contains people living under constant fear, leads itself to see other countries as threats. Thus, a country must have a strong political will to be able to bring its people to work and to protect their country from other countries that are full of threats. This is what leads to a security dilemma, a dilemma that occurs because of military strengthening by one country that is seen by other countries as a threat. Thus, politics, in the context of Realism Theory is political survival. Every country struggles to survive because other countries are going to hurt and threaten them. Thus, Jackson and Sorensen (2013) concluded if a country has survived the threat of other countries, or even defeated other countries that are very threatening to their existence, then they will get peace and felicity.

In analysing Japan's interests in the security context, it is relevant to use Realism Theory. This is because North Korea, as one of the countries that has nuclear weapons and which often conducts various confrontations in Northeast Asia, is a country that certainly threatens the existence and survival of other countries, such as Japan. With the various confrontations that pose a threat to Japan, it can certainly encourage Tokyo to have an interest that is inherent in deterring the threat. In Realism

Theory, a country always sees other states as threatening entities, and this has been proven by the behaviour of North Korea. Thus, it is appropriate that the survival of a country is the first national interest so that other interests can be carried out and achieved. However, it will bring a security dilemma for the Northeast Asia region and will pose a threat to Japan, especially because of the wild behaviour of North Korea. Of course, the threat to Japan from North Korea did not occur in "one night only", but could occur due to various things, especially when being viewed from a historical perspective.

## **JAPAN AND KOREA RELATIONS**

On August 22, 1910, the Japanese Empire annexed the entire Korean Peninsula and brought various changes to Korean society. Dudden (2006) explained the government of the Japanese Empire on the Korean Peninsula was first represented by Governor-General Terauchi Masatake. He led Korea with iron fists and military rule (*budan seiji*) and this can be proven by various actions that are contrary to human rights, such as depriving Korean people of the freedom of assembly, association, the press, and speech. Britannica (2019) explained that schools were closed by the Japanese colonial government, and even the Japanese colonial government forbade the teaching of the Korean language in various schools. In short, Blakemore (2020) concluded that the Japanese colonial government waged an all-out war on Korean culture.

In addition to the cultural field, Korean people also underwent changes where they must be able to serve the Japanese Empire. Dudden (2006) stated that various Koreans were used as forced labourers and slaves in many factories and a lot of Korean women were used as sex workers (comfort women) in various sex camps throughout the Japanese Empire. Furthermore, the Japanese Empire also tried to spread their country's religion, namely Shinto. Even the spread of Shinto religion was carried out by the Japanese Empire by forcing Korean people to accept Shintoism and worship the gods of Imperial Japan. Blakemore (2020) also asserted that Korean people were forced to worship deceased emperors and the spirits of war heroes who helped to conquer the Korean Peninsula. The treatment of the Japanese Colonial Government was carried out until the end of the Second World War when the Japanese Empire had to accept the bitter pill of defeat.

In 1945, Japan was forced to leave the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Colonial Government in Korea represented by the last Governor-General, Nobuyuki Abe, had to end. The defeat of the Japanese Empire was marked by the signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945. Dudden (2006) explained that the departure of the Japanese Empire from the Korean Peninsula, the defeat of Japan in the Greater Asia War, and the signing of the Japanese surrender, marked the collapse of the Japanese Empire. Britannica (2019) stated that the surrender of the Japanese Empire gave a sense of independence to the Korean people after being colonized by the Japanese Empire for 35 years. However, the feeling of pain from the bitter treatment of the Japanese Empire during the colonial period was still felt and could not go away even though Japan had left the Korean Peninsula. Koreans felt pain again by the division of Korea into two, namely North Korea (which was influenced by the communist Soviet Union) and South Korea (which was influenced by the democratic United States). However, the two

Koreas still "agree" on one thing, namely hating Japan for the treatment of the Imperial Japanese Colonial Government during their occupation of the Korean Peninsula.

The defeat of the war had a significant impact on Japan's image in the eyes of the international community at that time. To improve its image, Japan tried to normalise relations with the newly independent countries that were occupied by the Japanese Empire, this included normalising relations with North and South Korea. For South Korea, Japan was seen as a big enemy and this can be seen when President Syngman Rhee was in power. Kamiya (1980) explained that President Syngman Rhee's government (1948 – 1960) ran on two pillars, namely anti-communism and anti-Japanese sentiment. Oda (1967) stated that the anti-Japanese sentiment is a policy that Japan wants to get rid of and this was attempted by Japan through the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. The United Nations (1966) stated that one part of this agreement reads "*Recognizing the importance of their close cooperation in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations to the promotion of their mutual welfare and common interests and the maintenance of international peace and security*". Japan also provided reparation funds due to the colonization of South Korea which were used by Seoul to develop their country. Starting from this agreement, relations between Japan and South Korea began to improve, but the bitter tastes of colonialism are still stored in the hearts of Korean people from the treatment of the Japanese Empire. Improved relations, although still coloured by various issues, have been formed thus making Japan and South Korea have official relations. This is in contrast to North Korea where Japan and North Korea have never had official relations.

Hong-Nack (1992) said that although there are no official relations, there have been repeated attempts to normalise relations between Japan and North Korea, such as the three rounds of preliminary discussions, namely in the fall of 1990, Pyongyang 1991, and Tokyo 1991. Prior to these meetings, Japan had been trying to improve its relations with North Korea, one of which was through an apology. One of the apologies made by Japan was through a statement of apology on March 30, 1989. The Prime Minister of Japan at that time, Takeshita Noboru, realized that the Japanese Empire had committed 'significant suffering and wrongs' (*tadai no kutsū to songai*) that the Japanese Empire had committed. Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru also expressed his 'deepest regrets and remorse' (*fukai hansei to ikan*) to all residents of the Korean Peninsula (Carbonnet, 2015). Although there have been apologies and preliminary discussions, North Koreans still felt a sense of revenge over the Japanese Empire's treatment of Korean citizens at that time, and it can be proven that North Korea has always stated that Japan was one of the countries that divided Korea into two (Hong-Nack, 1992). Despite accusing Japan could complicate relations even though there are no official relations with Japan, in fact, North Korea still need Japan, such, as North Korea demanded Japanese compensation for the 35 years of occupation following the Second World War (Hong-Nack, 1992).

Thus, Japan's relations with the two Koreas were greatly influenced by past events, which as explained above by the various treatments of the Japanese Empire that were contrary to human rights. At present, Japan's relations with the two Koreas are still tinged with past issues. However, Japan has "good" relations with South Korea. As for North Korea, Japan still does not have official relations and with North

Korea's threatening treatment of Japan, it can be stated that the relations between the two countries are much worse than Japan's relations with South Korea.

## **JAPAN AND NORTH KOREA RELATIONS**

In terms of the security of Northeast Asia, the challenging proximity of Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (previously Korea) has been a persistent problem. Since neither party has come close to reconciliation. The issue of Korea and Japan's proximity has been significantly affecting Asian affairs for more than a century. Tension does not appear to be reduced by the absence of formal diplomatic ties between the two nations, which date back to when the peninsula was split into two distinct entities that were recognised by the international community. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear doctrine clashing with Japan's nonproliferation and disarmament policy, as well as the weight of historical claims on each side of the conflict, provide a strong foundation for ongoing political deadlock (Ploetzing, 2015).

Then, concerning the kidnapping issue, North Korea's post-war list of illegal and malicious activities is also a significant roadblock to the two countries' reconciliation. The issue of kidnappings of Japanese citizens is the most challenging and the main issue separating the two nations because it violates and undercuts Japan's sovereignty and jeopardizes national security because some of the kidnappings took place on Japanese soil (Ploetzing, 2015). Even though the majority of the kidnappings probably occurred in the 1970s and 1980s (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2012), they continue to be a contentious topic that has engendered hostility on both sides of the diplomatic dispute. On the one hand, there is the Japanese government, which aspires to bring all of the missing people safely home and to reunite them with their families. On the other hand, there are the families of the missing people, who have been fervently campaigning to bring attention to the kidnapping issue. However, Pyongyang is unwilling to free hostages who were involved in espionage and terror preparation in North Korea's neighbours. The Japanese government led by Abe Shinzo has dedicated USD 10 million to investigate and solve the abduction issue (Maslow, 2013). Japan uses the possibility of easing very strict economic sanctions, imposed on North Korea after their nuclear tests, to acquire a more powerful bargaining position. Positive signs in the case are beginning to appear, as Yokota's parent, who was abducted as a thirteen-year-old girl, was able to see their granddaughter for the first time. A meeting was held on neutral grounds in Mongolia (Ploetzing, 2015).

Additionally, contrary to several pertinent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, North Korea has not completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantled all of its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges. Using ballistic missile technology, North Korea conducted four launches in 2021, in violation of pertinent UNSC resolutions. Pyongyang has been launching ballistic missiles regularly and in novel ways since the beginning of 2022 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). North Korea launched intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) on February 27 and March 5, though not at their full range (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022). Additionally, on March 24, it allegedly launched a brand-new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which is thought to have landed

about 150 kilometres off the Japanese mainland in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The actions that North Korea has taken in the past are completely unacceptable and endanger the peace and security of Japan, the surrounding area, and the global community. Japan will continue to work with the United States and South Korea in close coordination to fully implement pertinent United Nations Security Council resolutions and pursue North Korea's denuclearisation.

## **NORTH KOREA'S ENDANGERMENT TOWARD JAPAN**

It is well known that certain actions taken by the Japanese Empire against the Korean people during the 35 years of colonialism violated human rights. Thus, it is natural that the Korean people still carry these wounds of the past. Due to the extremely cruel treatment of the Japanese Empire by the Korean population, the desire for retribution may still exist. Observing this, of course, demonstrates that, like North Korea, several nations in Northeast Asia are perceived to avenge Japan.

For North Korea, Japan is one of the mortal enemies apart from the United States and South Korea. Roy (1988) stated that this can be seen from various statements by the North Korean government in 1971, namely "*the atrocious nature of the Japanese militarists, born with the brigandish, aggressive nature, bestial cruelty, and unpassed cunning, cannot be altered, and it is becoming more pronounced*". Kim (2021) expressed that the hatred is still emerging today as the North Korean government has taught its people that Japan is the sworn enemy of the Korean people. Hatred for Japan has even been instilled in children since elementary schools in North Korea. Kim (2021) also said that North Korean students are taught that Kim Il-Sung is the leader of North Korea who succeeded in liberating Korea from Japan, Japan stole various resources from Korean society, and many Korean people suffered greatly under Japanese occupation. In short, the North Korean government has carried out various propaganda to its people to hate Japan.

Various actions taken by North Korea in Northeast Asia serve as evidence of their hatred for Japan. According to McCurry et al. (2017), Almond (2017), a BBC article titled "North Korea threatens Japan with 'real ballistic missile'" (2019), Callahan (2016), and a BBC article titled "North Korea fires ballistic missile over Japan" (2022), such threats include threatening Japan with nuclear weapons, which the weapon entered a new stage in 2017, conducting a missile launch in 2017 that is stated to be one of North Korea's means of exacting revenge on Japan as a result of 35 years of humiliation, and then North Korea threatened Japan with a "real ballistic missile" once more in 2019. It also allegedly, engaged in several kidnappings of Japanese citizens to exact revenge for Japan's historical atrocities against Korea, and on October 20, 2022, launched a ballistic missile through Japanese airspace. From these examples, it can be concluded that North Korea frequently uses its missiles and nuclear weapons to threaten Japan's security. This threat appeared only when North Korea had missile technology. Hymans (2008) mentioned that however, with the discovery of uncovered statements in diplomatic archives between North Korea and the Hungarian People's Republic, it is known that North Korea had prepared various missiles aimed at major cities in Japan since 1976.

Of the several things done by North Korea, surely these actions are extremely dangerous for the existence of Japan. In addition, Callahan (2016) said that North Korea also threatens the security of Japanese citizens where Pyongyang has carried out various kidnappings of Japanese citizens whose purpose is to make them spies for the North Korean government. However, NPA Japan (2011) reports this kidnapping was declared by Kim Jong-Il to the Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, at the 2002 Japan-North Korea Summit Meeting as one of the incidents carried out by several North Korean spy agents who got carried away by heroic illusions. Indeed, Kim Jong-Il stated that the kidnapping was merely an “incident” due to a misunderstanding by North Korean spy agents. However, this kidnapping case is not just one or two times, but many times.

The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (2011) stated that the North Korean government officially “confesses” that it abducted 13 Japanese nationals, eight died in North Korea and five were allowed to return home in October 2002. In addition, the Japan Times (2021) mentioned that one of the biggest kidnapping cases carried out by the North Korean government was the kidnapping of Megumi Yokota. In 1977, 13-year-old Megumi Yokota was kidnapped by North Korean agents and her whereabouts are still being questioned until now. Although the North Korean government admits that they only abducted 13 people, however, the number of Japanese citizens kidnapped is more than 13 people and until now it is not known how many Japanese citizens have been kidnapped by the North Korean government. To this day, according to the Japan Times (2021), the Japanese government continues to try to return Japanese citizens home, even though Japan calls for international cooperation to resolve North Korean abductions. Lankov (2020) commented in addition to kidnapping, several Japanese citizens who were supporters of North Korea also carried out acts of terror, such as the hijacking of Japan Airline Flight 351. Lankov (2020) also said that this plane hijacking was carried out by Japanese citizens who support North Korea and called themselves the 'Japanese Communist League Red Army Faction'. The hijackers hijacked the plane to change its destination to Pyongyang.

Various dangerous behaviours and influences carried out by North Korea on Japan and its people can form a negative stigma for Japanese society towards North Korea since it always causes many problems. This can be shown by the rise of anti-Korean sentiment and hate speech in Japan. Hankyoreh (2020) explained that this hatred does not only lead to North Korea but also to South Korea. This hatred is not only based on the behaviour of North Korea that threatens Japan and its people but also on the rise of nationalism and patriotism sense in Japan. Of course, the revival of a sense of nationalism and patriotism among Japanese people could lead Japan to strengthen its military, especially with threats from North Korea. However, Auer (1990) said that Japan was unable to do so due to Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution which states about the 'renunciation of war' and Japan has endeavoured to live within the spirit of the Pacifist Constitution.



## **INTERPRETING JAPAN'S SECURITY POLICY TOWARD KOREAN PENINSULA**

Article 9, concerning the 'renunciation of war' where Japan cannot attack other countries except when it is attacked, makes Japan unable to strengthen its military. But at the same time, North Korea is doing various things that threaten the existence and survival of Japan. The threat from North Korea must be overcome by the Japanese government so that the existence of Japan is not in danger of disappearing from the map of Northeast Asia. The Japanese government has also formulated policies, which can maintain Japan's presence in Northeast Asia amid many threats from North Korea. The Japanese government, according to Hiraiwa (2020), has four motives that form Japan's policy on North Korea, namely first, the normalisation of relations with North Korea is significant as a remaining postwar process, second is that security issues must be addressed, third is Japan's desire for the safety of Japanese lives, and fourth is economic opportunities in North Korea. Hiraiwa (2020) concluded that the policies formulated by the Japanese government are postwar processing, security, economics, national sovereignty and the safety of Japanese lives.

In the postwar processing context, it can be stated that this is Japan's way of normalising relations with the North Korean government. As noted earlier, the Japanese government has been trying to improve its relations with North Korea. However, the North Korean government is persistently stalling on Japan's desire to normalise relations and only wants to get a monetary gain if Japan normalises its relations with North Korea. This is proven by the wishes of the North Korean government in 1991 where they only wanted compensation from Japan and did not care about the problem of normalisation (Library of Congress Country Studies, 2009). Of course, the Japanese government did not want the purpose of normalisation that only benefited North Korean interests, such as to get money because North Korea had been abandoned by the Soviet Union and the communist countries of East Europe which had collapsed. However, the Japanese government continues to make normalisation efforts with the North Korean government, such as in Malaysia in 2002. In 2002, Japan and North Korea held the 12th Round of the Japan-North Korea Normalization Talks in which Tokyo still emphasized the importance of having smooth relations as fellow countries in the Northeast Asia region. In this meeting, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (2002), the Japanese government also emphasised human security issues, abduction issues, and security issues. Furthermore, Japan also stressed the importance of returning the five kidnapped Japanese citizens and security issues, including the nuclear problem. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (2002) also said the North Korean side still emphasises its interest in normalisation and economic cooperation. Thus, Voice of America (2009) said that many agreements were not reached because of the split made by North Korea to Japan during the normalisation talks in Malaysia in October 2002.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (2022) stated that in terms of security, Japan issued several things to North Korea, including clarifying the content of the program to enrich uranium, specific measures for the resolution of the issues or dismantling this program in a prompt and verifiable manner, and acceptance of inspections towards the full compliance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement. But of course, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (2022)

also said that Pyongyang does not want to dismantle its missile and nuclear weapon project because, for them, the hostile policies from the United States are the ones that caused North Korea to develop nuclear weapons and missile projects. Therefore, Pyongyang will not stop its nuclear and missile program and this has been proven by various nuclear weapons tests and missile launch tests.

In the context of national sovereignty and the safety of Japanese lives, Japan emphasised the return of five Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (2022), the North Korean side stated that they intended to resolve this issue and that it would be resolved smoothly and the five abducted Japanese citizens would be repatriated to Japan. NPA Japan (2011) shows that Japan also succeeded in realizing this interest with the repatriation of five Japanese citizens from North Korea which was successfully carried out in May and July 2004. Then in the field of economy, Hiraiwa (2020) explained that the Japanese government sees that if the North Korean government decides to open its country, there will be major business opportunities for Japan. For the Japanese government, Hiraiwa (2020) also mentioned that an open North Korea will provide Japan with countless opportunities to obtain underground resources such as rare earth materials that are highly of Japan's national interest. This is because Japan, according to Commodity (2020) and Britannica (2021) which is a heavy exporter of automobiles, electronics products, and computers, requires raw materials that can be found in North Korea, such as iron ore, zinc, lead, and molybdenum. Tokyo could also exploit North Korea's natural resources if it controlled the open North Korean market so that Japan's natural resources, in its mainland, could not be depleted.

From the four interests above – postwar processing, security, economics, and national sovereignty and the safety of Japanese lives – it can be seen that the Japanese government has “relations” with the North Korean government, but the relations are formed because of North Korea's attitude which often seeks trouble with Japan. The Japanese government, although some problems have been resolved some are still in the process of being resolved, still see North Korea as the biggest threat besides China. This can be seen from the Defense of Japan (Annual White Paper) in 2021. According to the Ministry of Defense Japan (2021), Japan's white paper, the Japanese Minister of Defense, Kishi Nobuo, stated that *"North Korea is proceeding with ballistic missile development at an extremely rapid pace. It launched ballistic missiles of a new type in 2021, and such military trends, including nuclear and missile development, pose grave and imminent threats to Japan's security"*.

The words by Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo were formed because of the attitude of North Korea which often seeks trouble in Northeast Asia, such as to continue developing nuclear and missile programs. Ministry of Defense Japan (2021) stated that this program is still being developed by the North Korean Government and the outcome of this program can be seen in the development of tactical nuclear weapons, preemptive and retaliatory nuclear strike capabilities, and the development of hypersonic gliding flight warheads. In addition, the Ministry of Defense Japan (2021) also said that new weapons are often shown by Pyongyang at various military parades, such as the military parade in January 2021 where North Korea displayed its new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and Submarine-launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) referred as Pukguksong-4 and Pukguksong-5. Of course, the four Japanese policies according to Hiraiwa (2020) fall into the security section.

Japan also sees that North Korea poses a threat in the field of national sovereignty. Ministry of Defense Japan (2021) stated that the North Korean government has been conducting increasingly diverse and aggressive cyber-attacks. In addition, North Korea has also carried out illicit ship-to-ship transfers in sea areas surrounding Japan. From 2018 to the end of March 2021, Self Defense Forces (SDF) observed 24 cases of illicit ship-to-ship transfer by North Korean vessels. Ministry of Defense Japan (2021) explained that one of them is the ship-to-ship transfer carried out by North Korean oil tankers to small vessels of unknown nationality. Some of these things finally led Japan to formulate four policies in dealing with North Korea and maintaining the security of Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

### **JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

Japan and South Korea can work together to combat North Korea's growing threat, even though they are two nations with several conflicts that could potentially worsen their relationship due to historical issues. This can be shown by the cooperation of Japan and South Korea, together with the United States in the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance. Indeed, if viewed from the Realism Theory, cooperation is something that needs to be avoided, because each country has its interests. However, the interests of one state can also have similarities with others which can lead each country to be able to reach an agreement so that they can work together to "subvert" other countries. This remains consistent with the analysis of the Realism Theory, according to which cooperation is possible because people tend to cooperate out of fear of being harmed or killed by their neighbours.

Yasuyo (2021) said that initially, the United States-Republic of Korea-Japan trilateral cooperation only consisted of South Korea (Republic of Korea or ROK) and Japan in "The Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration" in October 1998. The formation of this joint declaration is due to the awareness of South Korea and Japan who see that they need to have a forum that can connect them in discussing security issues as well as the defence exchange at various levels. South Korea and Japan also shared a view on the importance of both countries to steadfastly maintain their security arrangements with the United States. Yasuyo (2021) also explained that South Korea and Japan are increasingly acknowledging the role of the United States alliance on both sides. Furthermore, the forum for this cooperation developed into the United States-Republic of Korea-Japan trilateral alliance. Yasuyo (2021) concluded that the United States-Republic of Korea-Japan cooperation is engaged in security and interests in defending freedom and democracy, upholding human rights, promoting regional and global peace, security, and the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific and across the globe.

In the context of freedom and democracy, the United States, South Korea, and Japan always uphold democratic values. This can be seen according to the Economist Intelligence (2021) report from the prominent level of the democracy index in 2020 where the United States is indexed at 7.92, South Korea is 8.01, and Japan is 8.13. Whereas, North Korea has a low index of 1.08 being an authoritarian regime. The United States, South Korea, and Japan demonstrate their democratic values to countries in Northeast Asia, especially North Korea. This is supported by the spread

of democratic values carried out by the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance by agreeing to work together to improve the human rights situation in North Korea and committing to continue facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid to the neediest North Korea (Whitehouse.org, 2021). In addition, the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance continues to show a willingness to help facilitate the reunion of separated families of the two Koreas, coordinate approaches to North Korea in lockstep, address North Korean issues, protect shared security and prosperity, and bolster the rules-based order (Whitehouse.org, 2021).

By promoting regional peace, the United States, South Korea, and Japan have carried out various collaborations which can encourage the sustainability of regional peace in Northeast Asia. Several collaborations have been carried out, such as the United States which continues to be committed to the defense of South Korea. This collaboration, according to the United States Embassy and Consulate in the Republic of Korea (2021) is a form of United States commitment to continuously work together by the shared goals of securing peace, stability, and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. Embassy & Consulate in the Republic of Korea (2021) said that the collaboration is carried out to combat regional and global threats, as well as promote peace, security, and prosperity which brings the United States to keep its troops ready for the Korean Peninsula in support of United States commitment in the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty since its inception in 1953 which is to help South Korea on facing danger posed by external threats, especially North Korea. This was done because North Korea poses a serious threat to international peace, regional security, and the global non-proliferation regime. In addition, the U.S. Embassy and Consulate in the Republic of Korea (2021) concluded that the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance will continue to maintain and strengthen deterrence against and denuclearisation of North Korea through conducting a North Korea policy review.

From the security perspective, the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance continues to work together to maintain the security of the Northeast Asia region from North Korean nuclear weapons and missile threats. It shows that it can be seen from the various shared views and goals in the U.S.-ROK-Japan Trilateral Meetings which was held in February 2021 (State.Gov, 2021). Furthermore, this meeting discussed policy reviews in dealing with North Korea, exchanged views on shared North Korea related challenges, and emphasised continued partnership and close cooperation and coordination of the United States in Northeast Asia. This meeting is also a forum to demonstrate the commitment of each country to promote the denuclearisation of North Korea and the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

Thus, the existence of the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance also confers the importance of maintaining stability and security in Northeast Asia, which is a cooperation that can benefit each party, especially Japan. This is because Article 9 clearly states that Japan cannot strengthen its military beyond its limits only for defence, Tokyo can use this trilateral alliance and "use" the United States' presence in Northeast Asia to protect Japan and the region from the threat of North Korea's nuclear and missile attacks. Apart from this trilateral alliance, Japan and the United States have a military alliance based on the 'Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan.' This military alliance can certainly guarantee Japan's security from North Korea's attacks because of the presence of the United States soldiers in Japan. However, the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance and Japan's

military alliance with the United States can also benefit only one party, namely the United States.

Between 2022 and 2026, Wadhams and Faries (2021) explained that Japan must pay 211 billion yen or 1.8 billion USD to the United States. Therefore, the existence of an alliance pact, namely the U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance and the Japanese and United States military alliances, if examined from the Realism Theory, is a way for the United States to continue to benefit because of North Korea's threat to Japan and South Korea which ultimately created a security dilemma and which made the security conflict in Northeast Asia not quickly resolved, thus finally turned the security conflict into a "managed conflict" by the interests of several parties as a source of income to prioritise the United States national interest, namely to gain billions of dollars in profits.

### **JAPAN, THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH KOREA'S SECURITY POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA'S THREAT**

The issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has come to dominate alliance relations between the United States and Japan as well as Japan's growing security consciousness and activism. A significant post-Cold War shift in Japan's security outlook toward greater direct military cooperation with the United States and defence self-sufficiency has been largely attributed to North Korea's increasingly menacing nuclear and ballistic missile programs (Cronin, 2005).

Few leads have been discovered for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue since Pyongyang violated and then abandoned the United States-North Korean "Leap Day Deal" in February 2012 by test-firing a long-range ballistic missile while launching a satellite for "peaceful" purposes. Japan, the United States, and South Korea have been attempting to resolve this issue diplomatically through a strategy of "engagement and pressure" since the first nuclear crisis in the early 1990s (Tosaki, 2016). A disarmament strike against North Korea would not be a feasible option given the potential for a fierce counterattack by that nation. Tokyo, Washington, and Seoul could pursue "containment and crisis management" as measures in the current situation, where any efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue are facing serious deadlock and North Korea is still developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, while "engagement and pressure" have not necessarily worked as expected, to strengthen their deterrence postures (individually or collectively) against North Korea's nuclear program. In that regard, the "National Security Strategy" (NSS) was established in December 2013 and the Cabinet Decision on "Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People" in July 2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014), and the "Guidelines for Japan - the United States Defense Cooperation" were revised in April 2015 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.), and the Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security was passed in 2015 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016), the implications of Japan's security policy reforms are significant.

Japan cannot establish the necessary deterrence posture on its own to protect the nation from the nuclear and missile threat posed by North Korea. Japan depends on the United States for punishment-based deterrence and requires close cooperation

between the United States and South Korea in this area. Although there is no perfect deterrence, Tokyo, Washington, and Seoul must work together to strengthen a deterrence posture against North Korea across the entire spectrum from the lower to the higher end of a contingency and to maintain close security cooperation among the three countries in peacetime. This is important even though there is no perfect deterrence. In light of this, it is noteworthy that the new "Guidelines for Japan – the United States Defense Cooperation" stated that "the two governments will establish a new, standing Alliance Coordination Mechanism, enhance operational coordination, and strengthen bilateral planning" (Tosaki, 2016). To deal with the North Korean issue, security cooperation and close communication with South Korea are also crucial. The United States and South Korea's response against North Korea's nuclear and missile forces in the event of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula would be crucial for Japan's security. It could also be noted that Seoul's offensive deterrence strategy runs the risk of unintentionally escalating the crisis. On the other hand, in the event of such a scenario, Japan's participation and cooperation under the alliance between the United States and Japan will be crucial to the continuation of operations by the United States - South Korea alliance. Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington must work together to ensure their security.

## **CONCLUSION**

Interpreting Japan's security interests is still dilemmatic and one unresolved issue in Northeast Asia. Japan, as a country that is threatened by various North Korean military strengthening programs, such as nuclear weapons production, missile launches, military parades, even abduction, illicit activities, etc., must be able to formulate policies in which these policies must be in the security context so it can maintain its survivability. It needs to be formulated by Japan, considering that in Realism Theory, the existence of other countries can pose a dangerous threat. Furthermore, humans will always live in constant risk and nobody can be assured of his or her security and survival.

The Japanese government has formulated policies based on the security context, such as postwar processing, security, economics, national sovereignty and the safety of Japanese lives. The formulation of these four policies, when looking through Realism Theory, is formulated for the survival of the country. This is because, if a country can survive, then it can do other things that support the achievement of its national interests. Japan initiated this such as postwar processing in which it tried to improve its relations with North Korea but was rejected by Pyongyang because the North Korean government only wanted the benefits of normalisation. Furthermore, Japan has worked in the security sector to be able to maintain its existence and sustainability from the threat of North Korea. This is also realised by Japan in the United States-Republic of Korea-Japan alliance, the military alliance of Japan and the United States, Japan's activeness in maintaining peace in Northeast Asia, calls for denuclearisation in the Korean Peninsula, and others.

After Japan is safe from the threat of North Korea, which means Japan can survive and maintain its existence, then Japan can continue to develop its economic interests. The Japanese government also knows that to strengthen its economy, it requires various natural resources that support the country's production, and Tokyo

has seen that North Korea has various natural resources, such as iron ore, zinc, lead, molybdenum, and others which can support Japan's main export production, such as automobiles, electronics products, and computers. It is seen by Japan that there is a lot of economic potential if North Korea opens itself up. Therefore, the security of the Korean Peninsula is certainly important to Japan. If the Korean Peninsula is destroyed by nuclear war, then the Korean Peninsula can become a “dead land” where natural resources cannot be cultivated. This is one of Japan's interests when viewed from the Realism Theory, which is to survive and thrive and at the same time to “expand” its leverage to other countries. Therefore, in the end, Japan continues to maintain its national sovereignty and the safety of its people, which means that Japan can continue to maintain its sovereignty and existence and Japan will continue to gain support and legitimacy from its people. Thus, making Japan survive in this anarchic world.

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