

# Mutti Anggitta

## *North Korea and the U.S. Coercion Approaches*

The case of North Korea's nuclear weapons program has dominated the United States (US) non-proliferation agenda for at least 25 years. In efforts to deal with North Korea as a nuclear non-proliferation challenge, the US has persisted with a coercive non-proliferation approach for 25 years. Coercion usually involves three main features: diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and military threats against the targeted states. The US has employed all these types of coercion to achieve its goals vis-à-vis North Korea. Unfortunately, such long period has shown the limits of coercive non-proliferation approach. Although the US coercive non-proliferation policies have hurt and inconvenienced North Korea, slowed down its nuclear weapons program, raised the costs of its nuclear weapons program, and punished it for pursuing belligerent policies, the US has failed to achieve its core non-proliferation objective.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the studies in the non-proliferation field has attempted to explain why the US has persisted with coercive non-proliferation approach that has failed to achieve its objective for the last 25 years, particularly in North Korea. This paper argues that the US persisted with coercive approach against North Korea for decades because North Korea played the-tit-for-tat strategy against the US. This paper evaluates the argument and three other rival theories by employing process-tracing methods and archival analysis. In gathering evidence that either supports or negates the aforementioned explanations, this paper closely looks at important events and moments that shape the interactions between the US and North Korea since the Korean War to the present day. This long timeline is divided into 6 periods: 1) the Truman to Reagan era; 2) the Bush Sr. era; 3) the Clinton era; 4) the Bush Jr. era; 5) the Obama era; and 6) the Trump era.