

NORTH KOREA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIA:  
FROM KIM IL-SUNG TO KIM JONG-UN

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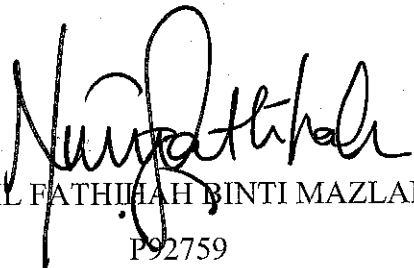
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this Research paper is my own except for quotations and summaries, which have been duly acknowledged.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the patterns of North Korea's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia countries bilaterally and multilaterally with the leadership as the dominant factor that ultimately influenced North Korea's foreign policy choices. The leadership factor as dominant factor is prescribed by Neoclassical Realism theory as it explains the internal characteristics of states that will intervene the leader's foreign policies choices. This paper uses a qualitative research method and the analysis focuses on the foreign policy choices towards Southeast Asia from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-Un. The puzzle that drove this research is the major changes in North Korea's foreign policy that have influenced North Korea for staying and being involved in ARF despite pressure from Great Powers. The assumption made by this research is that the leadership factor plays a dominant role in North Korea foreign policy choices especially when each leader has their own ideology and political interest. This research investigates how leadership factor affects the major changes in North Korea's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia and how the role of major powers gives different shifts in the foreign policy direction. Although the search for legitimacy, prestige and reunification with South Korea have been its ultimate goal, each of the North Korean leaders has different characteristics with different visions for their country, and their approach in targeting for their goals towards the present day is making North Korea being in the center of attention in the international arena. This study had found that North Korea's foreign policy is heavily influenced by its leadership factor as its foreign policy tend to have lack of trust with the impression of not depending on others. Major power role does give huge impact to the patterns of North Korea's foreign policy but not the extend that changes the policy direction as it is still up to the leaders' decision. Each leader has different ways in engaging with Southeast Asia, such as Kim Il-Sung who has personal relations with three Southeast Asian leaders – Norodom Silhanouk, Soekarno and Mahathir Mohamad which gave him the advantage to have closer relations with Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia during his time. His son, Kim Jong-Il - who was an economic pragmatic-oriented leader, as he needs to increase economic engagement with most Southeast Asian countries to bypass sanctions due to his nuclear tests. And Kim Jong-Un, who has stringent sanction regime due to his numbers of nuclear and ballistic missile tests transcending his father requires him to have much higher trade with Southeast Asian countries to finance his tests. So, the study proves the hypothesis that leadership factor in foreign policy agenda will determine the level of North Korea's engagement in its foreign policy towards Southeast Asia.

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