

Digital Transformation in the Implementation of the UN Charter: A Case Study of Joint Military Exercises to Reduce Tensions on the Korean Peninsula

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Abstract. Freedom Shield 23 is a bilateral joint military exercise between South Korea and the United States, conducted from March 13 to March 23, 2023. The exercise aims to strengthen the defense system against the increasing nuclear threat from North Korea. This normative legal research adopts an international legal perspective, relying on literature reviews to systematically and logically analyse the data using analytical descriptive methods. South Korea, while seeking to avoid military conflict with North Korea, has responded to ongoing nuclear provocations by engaging in military cooperation with the United States through Freedom Shield 23 as a peaceful deterrence effort. This exercise aligns with the objectives of the United Nations, particularly Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the UN Charter. Freedom Shield 23 is characterized by computer-simulated command post training, incorporating blockchain and AI technology to address the challenges of digitalization. The digital transformation facilitated by this exercise enhances the readiness and synchronization of South Korean and U.S. troops, thereby strengthening defense and supporting the UN's goals of maintaining regional security and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

1 Introduction

Defence cooperation aims to improve military relations between countries and increase the capabilities of military personnel, especially in maintaining state sovereignty and territorial integrity [1]. One of the collaborations in the defence sector, South Korea and the United States, carried out a joint military exercise known as Freedom Shield 23. This exercise took place from March 13 to March 23, 2023. The main aim of Freedom Shield 23 is to build a defence system that is strong, capable of warding off various potential threats and preparing for the increasing danger posed by North Korea.

Dreadfully, there is a belief that North Korea has weapons of mass destruction capable of causing significant damage to South Korean territory. Therefore, South Korea's strategy

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to balance North Korea's military capabilities is to form military cooperation with influential countries, such as the United States [2].

Every country aspires to increase its military capabilities to prepare itself to face all potential threats to state sovereignty, both from within and outside the country. This requires the development of advanced weapons technology and defence equipment to counter all types of military threats effectively. This has triggered the encouragement of every country to carry out international cooperation in the fields of military, security, and defence [3].

Current military cooperation also opens opportunities for the use of digital technology in the military field. The interdependence relationship is clearly visible between military operations and technological advances that seek to improve the capabilities of the armed forces. The spectrum of military command is highly dependent on the information environment, which allows commanders to collect, distribute and act on information. The results of complex hierarchical transfers lead to decision-making outcomes for all levels of leadership. Optimal military decisions require the formulation of appropriate conceptual and operational responses to impending threats [1]. Therefore, this research address to find how digital transformation in joint military exercises between South Korea and the United States be implemented to support the UN Charter's goal of reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Freedom Shield 23

Freedom Shield 23, a joint military exercise between South Korea and the United States, has roots dating back to the Korean War in 1950 when North Korea launched attacks to unify the Korean Peninsula. South Korea, supported by the United States and UN troops, took defensive measures to resist this effort, while North Korea received military backing from China and the Soviet Union [4]. In 1953, after an armistice, the U.S. entered a defence alliance with South Korea through the Mutual Defence Treaty, aimed at preventing conflict and balancing influence in East Asia against the Soviet Union. This treaty also formed the basis for Extended Deterrence, addressing North Korea's nuclear threat. In 1957, the U.S. established the United States Forces Korea (USFK) in Seoul, under the Pacific Command (USPACOM) [5]. USFK, beyond serving as a military base, focuses on enhancing South Korea's military capabilities, as outlined in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed in 1966. In 1998, the United States and South Korea raised concerns regarding North Korea's launch of a nuclear-powered missile. North Korea is actively improving its nuclear weapons and conducting tests with a range of 1,700 km. North Korea's strengthened defences, supported by its nuclear arsenal, pose a threat to South Korea, prompting South Korea to increase its country's defence and security measures [6].

According to the Republic of Korea's Ministry of National Defence, North Korea conducted missile tests between 2016 and 2017 that violated the Korean Air Defence Identification Zone (KADIZ). This raises concerns about the possibility of endangering the safety of civilians and state security [6].

The implementation of Freedom Shield 23 on the Korean Peninsula, as a joint effort between South Korea and the United States, is an example of consistent military cooperation. South Korea does not have sufficient technological capabilities to counter North Korean weapons. Therefore, South Korea is establishing military cooperation with the United States through the Freedom Shield 23 military exercise. This exercise aims to train military personnel to defend against North Korean attacks and improve military

equipment by deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system. This strategic maneuver was a direct response to the danger posed by North Korea's ballistic missile launches [5].

The joint Freedom Shield 23 military exercise carried out by South Korea and the United States aims to prevent armed threats from outside, especially nuclear-powered cruise missile attacks from North Korea. The Mutual Defence Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea has established measures to prevent armed threats proactively [7].

Article 2 of the Mutual Defence Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea clearly states that South Korea and the United States are committed to cooperating in the field of defence. This collaboration aims to proactively overcome potential external armed attacks that pose a threat to one of the parties, namely South Korea and the United States [7].

Cooperation in the defence sector is an integral part of a country's national interests because it is directly related to state sovereignty, security, regional stability, and improving the welfare of its citizens. Therefore, Freedom Shield 23 activities, which took place from March 13, 2023, to March 23, 2023, jointly hosted by the United States and South Korea, have the potential to generate military benefits, foster peaceful relations, and reduce conflict with North Korea [8].

2.2 Principles of International Law against North Korean Nuclear and Freedom Shield 23

South Korea and North Korea remain on high alert due to ongoing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. To strengthen its defence capabilities and promote peace, South Korea has initiated joint military exercises like Freedom Shield 23 with the United States [9]. This exercise aims to enhance South Korea's security and preparedness against potential military attacks from North Korea, whose nuclear and missile tests have caused regional instability and drawn international condemnation, particularly from the UN Security Council.

As part of their strategic alliance, the U.S. and South Korea plan to transfer wartime operational control from joint command to South Korea [10]. Both countries are committed to strengthening their alliance through mutually beneficial agreements, particularly in defence cooperation. Nuclear weapons, classified as weapons of mass destruction (WMD), include atomic explosives, radioactive, chemical, and biological weapons. North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launched in 2023, with a range exceeding 5,000 kilometers, is considered part of its nuclear arsenal, heightening the threat to regional stability [11].

Global agreements like the United Nations Charter, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) govern the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Similarly, international law, such as the Mutual Defence Treaty between the U.S. and South Korea, provides the framework for military cooperation, including joint exercises like Freedom Shield 23. These exercises aim to enhance military readiness in response to threats posed by North Korea [12].

Despite North Korea's nuclear activities, South Korea has refrained from using military force, opting instead for peaceful measures through military cooperation with the U.S. under Freedom Shield 23. This exercise aligns with Article 1 of the UN Charter, which mandates that participating countries work to maintain international peace and security [13]. By conducting these exercises, South Korea and the U.S. aim to strengthen their defence capabilities and prepare for potential military threats, particularly from North Korea's nuclear weapons.

2.3 Security Stability Korean Peninsula

The Korean Peninsula is one of the most strategic areas in the world, located in East Asia. Security dynamics and interactions in this region have a significant impact on global security. Apart from that, one of the Asian regions with the fastest economic growth is East Asia. East Asia is an important center of activity in the international political sphere because of its strategic location [14].

The security situation on the Korean Peninsula is so dire, with the inherent potential for conflict, that it is a concern for the international community because of its impact on regional stability and even global stability if regional security challenges are not addressed effectively. The risk of armed conflict cannot be ignored, given the ongoing military exercises between South Korea and the United States, which North Korea considers provocative actions. North Korea responded to this with a nuclear test and a statement of its readiness for war [14].

In addition to the ongoing inter-Korean conflict, the advancement of North Korea's missile and nuclear programs has emerged as a catalyst that has increased tensions on the Korean Peninsula and raised concerns among neighboring countries. As a result, countries in the region, especially countries that have direct concerns about security on the Korean Peninsula, immediately extended an invitation to North Korea for negotiations aimed at overcoming its nuclear program [15].

The Six-Party Negotiations are a series of multilateral meetings, including those held in China, the United States, Russia, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea, to discuss the issue of North Korea's nuclear program and seek a peaceful resolution. However, multilateral negotiations, which began in 2003 and have gone through several rounds, failed to reach an agreement and have been stalled since 2008. The United States, one of the participants in the negotiations, insisted that North Korea stop its nuclear program before continuing the negotiations. Meanwhile, North Korea considers the United States' attitude as the main obstacle to continuing negotiations. The end of the six-party negotiations indirectly allowed North Korea to continue developing its nuclear program and carrying out missile launch tests [16].

Resolving the nuclear problem in North Korea is not an easy problem. Various considerations have been made to stop North Korea's nuclear development, with the aim of achieving security stabilisation on the Korean Peninsula. The United States and South Korea developed various countermeasures to respond to North Korean nuclear threats. On the other hand, these efforts increase security problems and increase the sense of threat towards North Korea. North Korea is changing its military posture in response to increasing instability in the region. The complex relationship between North Korea, South Korea, and the United States that influences changes in North Korea's nuclear posture is often overlooked [17].

Crisis stability could be disrupted if North Korea takes proactive action because of misunderstanding the intentions of allied forces in the South or through strategic collaboration with China to disrupt the regional status quo. Research suggests that North Korea may use psychological warfare hybrid tactics and may resort to direct deployment of nuclear weapons, if supported by China, to achieve its goals. North Korea demonstrated restraint, especially regarding its nuclear weapons, in a situation where North Korea saw a decisive and decisive response from the United States, non-aggressive action from the United States and South Korea alliance and gained little to gain. However, the crisis in Northeast Asia has the potential to change this situation [18].

For seventy years, the tense situation on the Korean Peninsula has kept North and South Korea preparing for the worst. This makes it highly likely that North Korea misunderstood the military actions of the United States and South Korea alliance during the crisis involving Taiwan and perceived them as an immediate danger. If there is actual military

activity in and around the Korean Peninsula, North Korea will likely respond, increasing the likelihood of an undesirable conflict [19].

The stability of the Korean Peninsula during the crisis will face difficulties under certain conditions. North Korea's dissatisfaction with the existing political and military balance was a major determining factor in North Korea's decision to trigger the incident. If North Korea feels its position is being undermined or challenged, it will likely carefully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using force. Misjudgment of circumstances can also destabilise a crisis. Possible causes of misperceptions may include North Korea's anticipation of changes in United States reaction priorities, potential internal divisions within South Korean society, or tensions in the United States' alliance with South Korea [20].

3 Research Methods

This research used a normative juridical approach with a focus on the analysis of written legal documents such as statutory regulations, court decisions, and opinions of legal experts [21]. The literature review method was used to search for ideas and opinions related to the research topic, with an international legal approach as the focus [22]. The data in this research was obtained from secondary sources such as statutory regulations, books, journals, and internet sites that are relevant to the research topic [23].

Primary legal materials included the Mutual Defence Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea (1953), the 1907 Hague Convention, and the UN Charter. Meanwhile, secondary legal materials include relevant reference books and scientific journals. Tertiary legal materials function as complementary sources by providing explanations of primary and secondary legal materials.

This research was conducted at the Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah University Library using a library study, which involved reading and recording data from various library sources [24]. Data processing was carried out systematically and logically, using qualitative data analysis techniques that refer to certain problems related to the legal materials mentioned previously.

4 Discussion

The Freedom Shield 23 joint exercise will last for 11 days in March 2023, and will involve military units from the United States, South Korea, and the United Nations Command. The exercise demonstrates the strong and unwavering dedication of South Korea and the United States to ensuring security and stability on the Korean Peninsula and throughout Northeast Asia. Freedom Shield 23 refers to a series of defense exercises conducted by South Korea and the United States on the Korean Peninsula. The exercise aims to enhance combat readiness and strengthen the joint defense posture of the two countries.

Steps to avoid a nuclear confrontation with North Korea, which could potentially result in heavy casualties, serious injuries, and significant physical destruction, is a global desire [37]. To avoid conflict, it is important to have adequate equipment and preparation and show North Korea that it will not win in a confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, even if North Korea deploys its nuclear weapons [25].

North Korea's nuclear and missile tests caused regional instability and drew criticism from the UN Security Council [26]. The United States and South Korea have developed a strategic plan to forge an alliance on the Korean Peninsula with the goal of shifting wartime operational control away from the existing joint command, currently under South Korean leadership.

The South Korean military has implemented a series of strategies to increase its military capabilities. In effect, this effectively instilled fear in North Korea by using South Korea's increasing military might, along with support from the United States through the Freedom Shield 23 program. The United States and South Korea are committed to reaching a mutually beneficial agreement to deepen defence cooperation. The purpose of South Korea's decision to establish defence cooperation with the United States is to increase its military capabilities to maintain security and stability on the Korean Peninsula [27].

The United States and South Korea have formed an alliance based on the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1953. The agreement allows the presence of United States military forces on the Korean Peninsula to help South Korea maintain its security, especially in the event of potential aggression from North Korea. At the level of military relations between countries, governments such as South Korea and the United States utilised joint military exercises in the Freedom Shield 23 program to foster cooperation on mutual security issues related to the Korean Peninsula [28]. The alliance between South Korea and the United States engages in joint military exercises to develop strategic defence ideas tailored to meet the security requirements of the Korean Peninsula, which faces threats from North Korean nuclear missiles.

On Sunday, March 12, 2023, North Korea launched two strategic cruise missiles from a submarine and launched them in waters off the East coast of Korea. The launch was just before the start of joint military exercises with the United States and South Korea. The missile is estimated to have traveled more than 1,500 kilometers before reaching its designated target at sea. The 8.24 Yongung submarine is North Korea's only officially recorded experimental ballistic missile submarine.

Some researchers argue that North Korea is committed to advancing missile technology. Regarding submarine technology, the focus is on the operational and training procedures of the new submarines being developed. The launch of a strategic cruise missile by North Korea has resulted in a state of high alert in South Korea [29]. This action violates Article 2, paragraph (4) of the UN Charter because it endangers South Korea's sovereignty and threatens the security and stability of the Korean Peninsula.

This provision is also supported by UN General Assembly Resolution Number 2625 of 1970 concerning Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation between Countries [38]. The resolution underlines the prohibition of a country or alliance of countries from intervening, either directly or indirectly, in the domestic or foreign affairs of another country. Furthermore, according to Article 2, paragraph (4) of the UN Charter, the use of threats or violence against other countries is expressly prohibited [30].

South Korea, as the country closest to North Korea, is very concerned about the potential danger posed by North Korea's nuclear testing activities. South Korea aims to avoid mistakes when responding to North Korean threats. South Korea refrained from deploying its armed forces in response to North Korea's actions and chose to increase its military defence capabilities through collaborative efforts with the United States, one of the world's superpowers. South Korea's activities in this situation require that countries refrain from taking actions that could worsen the situation, endanger peace and security, and hinder efforts toward a peaceful settlement.

According to South Korea, the most important thing is to use peaceful means to resolve conflicts and refrain from activities that worsen the situation. Freedom Shield 23, which took place on the Korean Peninsula, is in line with Article 1 paragraph (1) of the UN Charter, and party states are obliged to uphold international peace and security by effectively addressing and preventing threats involving violations of the peace [31].

The joint military exercise Freedom Shield 23 is a profitable endeavor as it provides an opportunity to improve aircraft command and control skills. Freedom Shield 23 played a

critical role in the establishment of effective and integrated air control procedures. This marked substantial initial progress for United States and South Korean Marine Corps aviation units [32], allowing them to collaborate and successfully execute future missions. Exercise Freedom Shield 23 seeks to improve relations between South Korea and the United States. Exercise Freedom Shield 23 strengthens the collaborative defence capabilities of South Korea and the United States, thereby strengthening security and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

In addition, during a joint press conference, the South Korean and US militaries announced their intention to conduct the Freedom Shield 23 exercise which will involve computer-simulated command post training and will take place from March 13 to 23. The main purpose of the exercise is to enhance their defense and response capabilities. In addition, they will also conduct a large-scale joint field exercise known as Warrior Shield FTX. This is also a form of adaptation of technological transformation in the military field.

Computer-simulated command post training in joint military exercises involves military personnel engaging in computer-based simulations to practice command and control activities. During these exercises, participants engage in simulations of several scenarios, including responding to threats, coordinating troop movements, and making strategic decisions, all in a virtual environment. Simulations are useful for improving communication, decision-making, and coordination skills, which in turn increase the effectiveness of collaborative military operations [33].

Enhanced and innovative collaboration offers a variety of benefits, including increased accuracy and efficiency in operations [36]. The integration of modern technology with human intelligence in the manufacturing industry has had a beneficial effect on decision making by increasing the ability to adjust and adapt processes. Improvement refers to items that effectively meet specific individual requirements and could adapt quickly to change. This improvement has the potential to build a more effective, efficient, and sustainable defense system over time [35].

Integrating digitalization into military decision-making is critical to optimize operational performance, strengthen resilience, ensure sustainability, and effectively mitigate risks and disruptions. Many academics have highlighted the significant impact of digital technologies, including smart contracts, additive manufacturing, robotics, virtual and augmented reality, advanced manufacturing technologies with sensors, and blockchain-based intelligent traceability, on supply chain management (SCM). Therefore, it is critical to build a resilient decision system that can withstand disruptions, recover quickly, and minimize costs [33].

Digitization has many benefits, including database accessibility, resource security, and preservation in newly digitized formats. Furthermore, digitization enables digital cultural property, including texts, databases, photographs, sounds, graphics, and web pages, across multiple locations, languages, and domains. Facilitating the process of converting decisions into digital formats enables leaders to generate, distribute, and utilize knowledge effectively [34]. Knowledge-based structure relates to the extent to which an organization facilitates knowledge and encourages learning and growth for effective management and operations.

This digital strategy enables leaders to make decisions that address the specific requirements of each unit or beneficiary while ensuring efficient and cost-effective supply, maintenance, repair, or replacement operations. By quickly addressing current military maneuvers and the needs of the upper echelon hierarchy, they can remain ready in a more dynamic operational environment. The primary focus of implementing digital tools is to minimize environmental impact and recognize the principles of a circular economy within the military [34].

It is essential to ensure that all military units are equipped with adequate digital resources to facilitate the decision-making processes required for modern military

operations. This will enable all categories of military personnel to achieve the required level of digital literacy and improve their decision-making performance. In addition, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and digitalization will exclude current leaders who need access to ICT equipment, digital data, or guidance in communications and informatics [35].

Today, systems powered by artificial intelligence provide better information and decision-making capabilities, which in turn accelerates activities and enhances human understanding. AI technology offers many possibilities to increase the accessibility of information, enable more effective decision-making, and accelerate the completion of work. In the future, the use of AI support has the potential to improve command and control structures, leading to increased efficiency and reduced reliance on human staff [33].

However, while this technology has the potential to reduce costs and increase productivity, it also presents unforeseen challenges that require extensive testing. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the capacity to surpass human limitations, but it is important to recognize that AI can have inherent biases and fail to recognize significant changes if not trained with the appropriate data. Simply put, machine learning, when programmed to mimic the functioning of the human brain, is just as susceptible to bias. AI can overlook potentially significant changes and instead, function solely based on the data it was trained on.

The advent of digital transformation has greatly influenced the implementation of the UN Charter's goal of upholding peace, particularly through joint military exercises conducted by South Korea and the United States. Through the integration of digital technology, exercises such as Freedom Shield 23 can produce real-world simulations that enhance the readiness and synchronization of the two countries' military forces. Computer simulations allow for the exploration of complex scenarios without real danger, thereby enhancing the ability to effectively respond to threats on the Korean Peninsula. This not only strengthens defense but also helps the UN's goal of establishing regional security and stability effectively and efficiently.

5 Conclusions

In conclusion, the Freedom Shield 23 joint military exercise conducted by South Korea and the United States from March 13-23, 2023, represents a strategic and peaceful effort to maintain security on the Korean Peninsula and prevent the escalation of conflict. This exercise aligns with Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the UN Charter, emphasizing the importance of regional peace and stability, particularly in response to the nuclear and ballistic missile threats posed by North Korea. By utilizing computer-simulated command post training, Freedom Shield 23 demonstrates how digital transformation, through the integration of blockchain and AI technologies, can enhance military resilience, risk management, and operational efficiency. However, the widespread application of digital tools must be carefully managed to avoid imbalances that could disrupt command structures or operational coherence. The digital transformation seen in Freedom Shield 23 not only strengthens defense capabilities but also supports the UN's objectives by ensuring readiness and synchronization of forces without the risks associated with live exercises. Therefore, military organizations should continue to explore and integrate emerging digital technologies, manage their application with balance, and promote ongoing collaboration and training to ensure that military leaders can effectively leverage these technologies. Regular assessments of digital technology applications in military exercises are necessary to ensure alignment with strategic goals and to prevent unforeseen risks while focusing on scalable and adaptable solutions suited to various operational contexts.

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