

US-North Korea Relations: Experts Weigh in on Future Course

"Who is the threat to world security? The United States is. Does any country threaten U.S. security? The answer is no," Michel Chossudovsky told teleSUR.

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The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has toned up nuclear force rhetoric as a U.N. Security Council resolution passed tougher sanctions after Pyongyang's latest missile test in September.

Renewing the DPRK's commitment to becoming a "state nuclear force," the sanctions are "futile" and will "lead to their final doom," said the country's state news agency KCNA Sunday, referring to the U.S. and allies.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2375 restricted the supply of fuel into the DPRK and imposed a ban on its textile imports. "The U.S. and the South Korean puppet forces are mistaken if they think that sanctions and pressure will keep (the DPRK) from attaining the goal of completing the state nuclear force," said KCNA.

On Sept. 26, U.S. President Donald Trump **warned** Pyongyang again at a White House news conference, saying that any U.S. military option would be "devastating" for North Koreans.

As Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met with Chinese President Xi Jinping Saturday in Beijing, discussing efforts to curb the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, Trump posted on Twitter that Tillerson "is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man."

Tillerson told reporters during his visit to China that the U.S. is "probing" the DPRK to see if it is interested in dialogue.

"We ask: Would you like to talk? We have lines of communications to Pyongyang. We're not in a dark situation," stated Tillerson.

In an exclusive interview with teleSUR, former CIA agent John Kiriakou says that a South Korean general told him on condition of anonymity, that Seoul “believes the Chinese will urge all sides to go to the negotiating table.”

According to Kiriakou, the South Korean official “believes the U.S. is overreacting to the North Korean threat.”

Despite crescent belligerent rhetoric on all sides, Choe Son-hui, director general of the North American department at the DPRK foreign ministry, and one of its most prominent nuclear negotiators talked with top Russian diplomat Oleg Burmistrov in Moscow Friday.

Moscow and Pyongyang are ready to “find ways to solve regional problems through peaceful, political and diplomatic means,” said a statement from Russia’s foreign ministry after the meeting wrapped up, [reported](#) RT.

China and Russia have been trying for a long time to normalize tensions between the DPRK and the U.S., proposing a “double-freeze” plan in which Pyongyang suspends its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, in exchange for a halt in joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises, an alternative firmly rejected by Washington.

“The most likely scenario that I see is that the Chinese will intervene to push the idea of diplomacy. This will lead to talks, either directly or indirectly, between Washington and Pyongyang,” says the former CIA agent.

“War in the region serves nobody. It will endanger South Korea and Japan, it will force the U.S. and China to the brink of conflict, and, of course, it could destroy North Korea,” points out Kiriakou, who doesn’t believe things will get worse.

“I don’t believe that President Trump’s saber-rattling is a ‘policy,’” says the whistleblower, who was detained for two years by the U.S. government for denouncing the secret CIA torture methods, according to him directly commanded by President George W. Bush.

“I think it is an uncoordinated action, off the cuff, that Trump did without consulting any of his advisors, including those in the Departments of State or Defense. Those advisors will now try to walk him back from the statements. They will likely ask the Chinese to engage to smooth the path,” Kiriakou adds.

He agrees with some analysts, that DPRK leader Kim Jong Un wants to stay in power, which is an argument against nuclear war.

“If war breaks out, whether it’s nuclear or conventional, there is no way that Kim Jong Un can survive. If war breaks out, and I think it is highly unlikely, the U.S. will not stop until the North Korean government is destroyed.”

The U.S. historian Peter Kuznick, a nuclear expert, says in an exclusive interview with teleSUR that while he doesn’t like seeing nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, he understands why Kim Jong-un wants them.

“He feels he needs a credible deterrent against the United States in the wake of George W. Bush declaring North Korea to be part of the ‘axis of evil.’”

“He believes that otherwise, the U.S. will overthrow him. After what happened in Iraq and Libya, he’s got good reason to think that way,” Kuznick added.

Asked about the current risk of a nuclear confrontation, Kuznick differs from Kiriakou:

“The situation is very dangerous. This is the closest we’ve come to nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis, with the possible exception of the dangerous standoff between India and Pakistan in 2001 and 2002, another crisis that continues to fester, and it doesn’t look like Trump and Kim are capable of working this out.”

Kuznick takes into account recent history as a resource, especially the Cold War, to warn what may happen today.

“What Kennedy and Khrushchev learned during the Cuban Missile Crisis is that once a crisis develops, it quickly spins out of control.

“Despite the fact that both of them were trying desperately to avoid a nuclear war in 1962, they realized that they had lost control,” he says, “They moved after that to eliminate any conflict that might cause another crisis. That was Khrushchev’s initiative and Kennedy eventually responded.”

“Imagine what would be left of the world today if that was Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un confronting each other in October 1962, instead of Kennedy and Khrushchev.”

Canadian economist Michel Chossudovsky, director of the Centre for Research on Globalization, is even more incisive in his comments to teleSUR:

“Who is the threat to world security? The United States is. Does any country threaten U.S. security? The answer is no.”

Kuznick also points out,

“The U.S. has created a new kind of empire undergirded by between 800 and 1,000 overseas military bases from which U.S. special forces operate in more than 130 countries each year.”

Chossudovsky reiterates that the

DPRK “lost 30 percent of its population from 1950 to 1953 as a consequence of U.S. bombings in the Korean peninsula, destroying every city and village, and 97 percent of the North Korean landscape. Every single family has lost their family members.”

“Since then, every year the U.S. and South Korea have conducted military exercises against North Korea. They decided to defend themselves as the U.S. is not a model society,” remarks the economist.

The U.S. nuclear expert says he doesn’t know what to expect from U.S.-DPRK tensions, pointing out only one solution, “an acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, as odious as that prospect might be.”

“There will have to be a peace treaty ending the Korean War. The U.S. will have to reduce its military presence and training exercises in South Korea and stop threatening regime change. It may have to also ease its sanctions.

“North Korea will have to halt its missile and nuclear weapons tests and freeze its programs. It will have to stop making threats. This is what we call the ‘freeze for freeze’ option. Something like that was in place between 1994 and 2002 and it was largely successful though neither side fully met its responsibilities. It can work again,” he concludes.

The historian based out in Washington also points out that

“Trump needs an external threat to justify his regime’s massive increase in military spending and unconscionable cuts to domestic programs and social spending.”

Recently the U.S. Senate passed a US\$700 defense policy bill for 2018, as the WHO [admonishes](#) the country for “not having a universal health coverage.”

In the DPRK, some 99 percent of the population had access to sanitation, and 100 percent have access to water. [According to](#) World Health Organization’s Director-General Margaret Chan, the country had “no lack of doctors and nurses,” pointing out that local “health system is the envy of the developing world.”

According to UNESCO, Public Education in the DPRK is universal and fully funded by the state.

“Education in North Korea is free, compulsory, and universal for 11 years, from ages four to 15, in state-run schools. The national literacy rate for citizens 15 years of age and older is 99 percent,” reported the [Library of Congress, Federal Research Division](#) in July 2007.

Such facts evidence a contradiction in the Western concept of democracy, especially regarding the U.S., the only country in history which has ever dropped atomic bombs on populations.

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