

Why Can't Wheeler-Dealer Trump Cut a Deal with North Korea?

By [Mike Whitney](#)

Global Research, August 26, 2017

[CounterPunch](#) 25 August 2017

Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Military](#), [Nuclear War](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [NORTH KOREA](#), [Nuclear War](#)

The United States and South Korea are currently engaged in large-scale, joint-military war games that simulate an invasion of the North, the destruction of the DPRK's nuclear weapons sites, and a "decapitation operation" to take out the supreme leader, Kim Jong-un. The objective of the operation is to intensify tensions between North and South thereby justifying the continued US occupation of the peninsula and the permanent division of the country.

Imagine if North Korea decided to conduct massive "live fire" military drills, accompanied by a Chinese naval flotilla, just three miles off the coast of California. And, let's say, they decided to send formations of strategic high-altitude aircraft loaded with nuclear bombs to fly along the Canada and Mexico borders while tens of thousands of combat troops accompanied by hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles rehearsed a "shock and awe" type blitz onto US territory where they would immediately crush the defending army, level cities and critical civilian infrastructure, and topple the regime in Washington.

Do you think the Trump administration would dismiss the North's provocative war games as merely "defensive maneuvers" or would they see them as a clear and present danger to US national security warranting a prompt and muscular response from the military?

It's a no brainer, isn't it? If North Korea treated the US like the US treats North Korea, then Washington would turn everything north of the 38th Parallel into a smoldering wastelands. That much is certain.

But double standards aside, the United States has always treated Korea with contempt and brutality. The ongoing war games are just the latest in a long line of provocations dating back more than a hundred years. In 1871, the US launched its infamous Korean Expedition in which US warships were deployed to the peninsula to force open markets and seize whatever wealth was available. Not surprisingly, the so called "diplomatic" mission quickly devolved into a full-blown conflagration as an armed contingent of 650 US troops landed on the Korean island of Ganghwa where they captured several Korean forts and slaughtered over 300 Korean soldiers. The battle culminated in a ferocious struggle for a citadel called Gwangseong Garrison. The Korean forces defended the fortress honorably, but their ancient matchlocks were no match for the American's vastly-superior Remington rolling-block carbines. The Korean forces were butchered defending their own country while the invading American army barely suffered a scratch. (Just three Marines were killed in the fighting.)

This was Korea's first taste of US savagery.

Washington's hatred for Korea reached its apex during the Korean War, a conflict in which the meddling US had no reason to be involved. The nationalist militias that had finally triumphed over 40-years of Japanese occupation, now had to face the full-force of the US military which was committed to containing communism wherever it popped up. In its demented attempt to impose its own values on the rest of the world, the US killed upwards of 3 million people, reduced most of the North to rubble, razed the main population centers to the ground, and viciously carpet-bombed reservoirs, irrigation dams, rice crops, hydroelectric dams, and all of the other life-sustaining infrastructure and food sources. The magnitude of the devastation was unimaginable, everything north of the 38th parallel was transformed into a moonscape. Washington wanted to make sure that survivors would face widespread famine, disease and Stone Age-type conditions for years to come. The US couldn't win the war, so it destroyed every trace of civilization.

According to the Asia-Pacific Journal:

"By the fall of 1952, there were no effective targets left for US planes to hit. Every significant town, city and industrial area in North Korea had already been bombed. In the spring of 1953, the Air Force targeted irrigation dams on the Yalu River, both to destroy the North Korean rice crop and to pressure the Chinese, who would have to supply more food aid to the North. Five reservoirs were hit, flooding thousands of acres of farmland, inundating whole towns and laying waste to the essential food source for millions of North Koreans.¹⁰ Only emergency assistance from China, the USSR, and other socialist countries prevented widespread famine." ("The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950 - 1960", The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus)

The idea that the conflict was a "civil war" was a charade to conceal what was actually taking place. In reality, the US was engaged in a battle to the death with a weaker but more determined national liberation movement that sought to break the bonds of foreign occupation. The US could not prevail in the conflict, but they did manage to force a compromise on their adversary, the partitioning of the state along the 38th parallel followed by the installing of a military dictatorship in Seoul. This is the bitter peace the US imposed on Korea.

Had the US had been defeated in Korea as they had been in Vietnam, the situation on the peninsula would probably be similar to that of Vietnam today. The country would be integrated under a central government, standards of living would have likely improved as the economy strengthened, and many of the ideological trappings of communism would have been discarded as the nation became more actively engaged in global trade.



Pyongyang in rubble (1953)

But the US was not defeated in the Korean War, it merely withdrew to military bases in the south where more than 30,000 US combat troops reside to this day. As a result, the southern part of the peninsula remains occupied territory, its government in Seoul largely complies with Washington's diktats, and the country is still split along the 38th parallel. Also, as the recent verbal confrontation between Washington and Pyongyang illustrates, hostilities could flare up at any time.

It's worth mentioning that since the war ended in 1953, the United States has toppled or attempted to topple over 50 sovereign governments. In that same period of time, the North has not attacked, toppled or invaded anyone, nor have they leveled sanctions on anyone, nor have they armed and trained neo Nazis, Islamic jihadists or other fanatical militants to execute their proxy wars in far-flung regions around the globe, nor have they established black sites where they brutalize their kidnapped victims with extreme forms of torture. North Korea may be a seriously-flawed and, perhaps, even tyrannical regime, but it has not pummeled entire nations into dust sending millions fleeing across continents to seek refuge. It has not bombed wedding parties, hospitals, mosques etc wreaking havoc while plunging the world deeper into chaos and despair. North Korea is far from perfect, but compared to the United States, it's looks like a paragon of virtue.

The North Koreans want peace. They want a formal end to the war and they want guarantees that the United States won't preemptively attack them. Is that too much to ask?

But the United States won't sign a treaty with the North because it is not in its interests to do so. Washington would prefer for things to stay just the way they are today. In fact, Hillary Clinton said as much in a speech she made to Goldman Sachs in 2013. Here's an excerpt:

CLINTON: "We don't want a unified Korean peninsula, because if there were one South Korea would be dominant for the obvious economic and political reasons.

We [also] don't want the North Koreans to cause more trouble than the system can absorb. So we've got a pretty good thing going with the previous North Korean leaders [Kim Il-sung and Kim Jung-il]. And then along comes the new young leader [Kim Jung-un], and he proceeds to insult the Chinese. He refuses to accept delegations coming from them.....So the new [Chinese] leadership

basically calls him [Kim Jung-un] on the carpet. ...Cut it out. Just stop it. Who do you think you are? You are dependent on us [the Chinese], and you know it. (WikiLeaks)

There it is in black and white. The US does not want a unified Korea. ("for obvious economic and political reasons.") The US wants to keep the country split up so it can keep the North isolated and underdeveloped, maintain the South's colonial dependence on the US, and perpetuate the occupation. That's what Washington wants. The goal is not security, but power, greed and geopolitical positioning.

From Washington's point of view, the status quo is just dandy which is why there is no incentive to end the war, sign a treaty, wind down the occupation, or provide security guarantees for the North. As Hillary cheerily opines, "We've got a pretty good thing going on."



Indeed. The only fly in the ointment is that young Kim is now toying with nuclear weapons which seems to have caught Washington by surprise.

But how could Washington be surprised when they've known the DPRK has had a nuclear weapons program since the early 1990s? Clearly, the issue should have been seriously addressed much earlier.

Even so, Washington's elite powerbrokers have yet to settle on a remedy for this fast emerging crisis, which is why the Trump administration is running around twisting arms (Russia and China) and escalating his bombast rather than taking the rational approach and engaging the North Koreans directly in bilateral negotiations.

Has anyone even considered that option yet?

The North is eager to negotiate because the North wants peace, it's as plain as the nose on your face. The North does not want a confrontation with the US because they know what the outcome would be. Complete and total annihilation. They know that and they don't want that. Nor do they want to unilaterally disarm and end up like Gadhafi or Saddam. That's why they built nukes in the first place, to avoid the Gadhafi scenario.

At this stage of the game, the US has just two options:

1. Ignore the issue until the North develops the ballistic missile technology needed to strike the mainland USA, thus, putting American cities and civilians at risk.

2. Negotiate an end to the war, provide security guarantees, and some economic inducements (oil and light-water reactors for electricity) in exchange for denuclearization and routine weapons-and-facilities inspections.

So what's it going to be: Door Number 1 or Door Number 2?

We've been down this road before. In the 1990s the Clinton administration worked out the terms for the so called Agreed Framework which could have succeeded had Washington kept up its end of the deal. But it didn't. Washington failed to meet its obligations, so now we're back to Square 1, and the Trump administration has to decide whether they're capable of making a rational decision or not. (Don't hold your breath) Here's how Jimmy Carter summed up the previous agreement in a Washington Post op-ed in 2010:

"Pyongyang has sent a consistent message that during direct talks with the United States, it is ready to conclude an agreement to end its nuclear programs, put them all under IAEA inspection and conclude a permanent peace treaty to replace the 'temporary' cease-fire of 1953. We should consider responding to this offer. The unfortunate alternative is for North Koreans to take whatever actions they consider necessary to defend themselves from what they claim to fear most: a military attack supported by the United States, along with efforts to change the political regime." ("North Korea's consistent message to the U.S.", President Jimmy Carter, Washington Post)

There's a peaceful way out of this crisis. Just sit down and negotiate. It's no big deal. People do it all the time. Heck, if Trump is half the wheeler-dealer he claims to be in his autobiography, it should be a piece of cake.

Let's hope so.

Mike Whitney lives in Washington state. He is a contributor to [Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion](#) (AK Press). Hopeless is also available in a [Kindle edition](#). He can be reached at fergiwhitney@msn.com.

Featured image is from Jake Cvnningham | [CC BY 2.0](#).

The original source of this article is [CounterPunch](#)

Copyright © [Mike Whitney](#), [CounterPunch](#), 2017

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Mike Whitney](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in

print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca