

Why North Korea Needs Nukes - And How To End That

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

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

Media [say](#), the U.S. may or may not kill a number of North Koreans for this or that or no reason but call North Korea 'the volatile and unpredictable regime' -b.

Now consider what the U.S. media [don't tell you](#) about Korea:

BEIJING, March 8 (Xinhua) — China proposed “double suspension” to defuse the looming crisis on the Korean Peninsula, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Wednesday.

“As a first step, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) may suspend its nuclear and missile activities in exchange for the suspension of large-scale U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) military exercises,” Wang told a press conference on the sidelines of the annual session of the National People’s Congress.

...

Wang said the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is mainly between the DPRK and the United States, but China, as a next-door neighbor with a lips-and-teeth relationship with the Peninsula, is indispensable to the resolution of the issue.

FM Wang, ‘the lips’, undoubtedly transmitted an authorized message from North Korea:

“The offer is (still) on the table and China supports it.”

North Korea has made the very same offer in January 2015. The Obama administration [rejected it](#). North Korea repeated the offer in April 2016 and the Obama administration [rejected it again](#). This March the Chinese government conveyed and supported the long-standing North Korean offer. The U.S. government, now under the Trump administration, [immediately rejected it again](#). The offer, made and rejected three years in a row, is sensible. Its rejection only led to a bigger nuclear arsenal and to more missiles with longer reach that will eventually be able to reach the United States.

North Korea is understandably nervous each and every time the U.S. and South Korea launch their [very large yearly maneuvers](#) and openly [train for invading](#) North Korea and [for killing its government](#) and people. The maneuvers have large negative impacts on North Korea’s economy.

North Korea justifies its nuclear program as the economically optimal way to respond to these maneuvers.

Each time the U.S. and South Korea launch their very large maneuvers, the North Korean conscription army (1.2 million strong) has to go into a high state of defense readiness. Large maneuvers are a classic starting point for military attacks. The U.S.-South Korean maneuvers are (intentionally) held during the planting (April/May) or harvesting (August) season for rice when North Korea needs [each and every hand](#) in its [few arable areas](#). Only 17% of the northern landmass is usable for agriculture and the climate is not favorable. The cropping season is short. Seeding and harvesting days require peak labor.

The southern maneuvers directly threaten the nutritional self-sufficiency of North Korea. In the later 1990s they were one of the reasons behind a severe famine. (Lack of hydrocarbons and fertilizer due to sanctions as well as a too rigid economic system were other main reasons.)



North Korean soldiers on agricultural duty – see [bigger](#) picture

Its nuclear deterrent allows North Korea to reduce its conventional military readiness especially during the all important agricultural seasons. Labor withheld from the fields and elsewhere out of military necessity can go back to work. This is now the official North Korean policy known as 'byungjin'. (Byungjin started informally in the mid 2000s after U.S. President Bush tuned up his hostile policy towards North Korea – [Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy](#))

A guaranteed end of the yearly U.S. maneuvers would allow North Korea to lower its conventional defenses without relying on nukes. The link between the U.S. maneuvers and the nuclear deterrent North Korea is making in its repeated offer is a direct and logical connection.

The North Korean head of state Kim Jong-un has officially announced a [no-first-use policy](#) for its nuclear capabilities:

“As a responsible nuclear weapons state, our republic will not use a nuclear weapon unless its sovereignty is encroached upon by any aggressive hostile forces with nukes,” Kim told the Workers’ Party of Korea congress in Pyongyang. Kim added that the North “will faithfully fulfill its obligation for non-proliferation and strive for the global denuclearization.”

During the congress, [as elsewhere](#), Kim Jong Un also [emphasized](#) (transcript, pdf, v. slow) the above described connection between nuclear armament and economic development. [Summarized](#):

After decades of emphasizing military strength under his father, Korea is moving toward Kim's "byongjin" — a two-pronged approach aimed at enhancing nuclear might while improving living conditions.

The byongjin strategy, [despised by the Obama administration](#), [has been successful](#):

What are the sources of [North Korea's economic] growth? One explanation might be that less is now spent on the conventional military sector, while nuclear development at this stage is cheaper—it may only cost 2 to 3 percent of GNP, according to some estimates. Theoretically, byungjin is more "economy friendly" than the previous "songun" or military-first policy which supposedly concentrated resources on the military.

To understand why North Korea fears U.S. aggressiveness consider the utter devastation [caused mostly by the U.S.](#) during the Korea War:



[via](#) Jeffrey Kaye – see [bigger](#) picture

Imperial Japan occupied Korea from 1905 to 1945 and tried to assimilate it. A nominal communist resistance under Kim Il-sung and others fought against the Japanese occupation. After the Japanese WWII surrender in 1945 the U.S. controlled and occupied the mostly agricultural parts of Korea below the arbitrarily chosen 38th parallel line. The allied Soviet Union controlled the industrialized part above the line. They had agreed on a short trusteeship of a united and independent country. In the upcoming cold war the U.S. retracted on the agreement and in 1948 [installed](#) a South Korean proxy dictatorship under Syngman Rhee. This manifested an artificial border the Koreans had not asked for and did not want. The communists still commanded a strong and seasoned resistance movement in the south and hoped to reunite the country. The Korea War ensued. It utterly destroyed the country. All of Korea was severely effected but especially the industrialized north which lost about a third of its population and all of its reasonably well developed infrastructure – roads, factories and nearly all of its cities.

Every Korean family was effected. Ancestor worship is [deeply embedded](#) in the Korean psyche and its collectivist culture. No one has forgotten the near genocide and no one in Korea, north or south, wants to repeat the experience.

The country would reunite if China and the U.S. (and Russia) could agree upon its neutrality. That will not happen anytime soon. But the continued danger of an "accidental" war in Korea would be much diminished if the U.S. would accept the North Korean offer – an end to aggressive behavior like threatening maneuvers against the north, in exchange for a verified stop of the northern nuclear and missile programs. North Korea has to insist on this condition out of sheer economic necessity.

The U.S. government and the "western" media hide the rationality of the northern offer behind the propaganda phantasm of "the volatile and unpredictable regime".

But it is not Korea, neither north nor south, that is the “volatile and unpredictable” entity here.

Update:

Yesterday’s Day of the Sun / Juche 105 (the 105th birth anniversary of Kim Il-sung) parade in Pyongyang went along without a hitch and without interference from the U.S. side.

Several new types of missile carrying Transporter-Erector-Launcher vehicles (TELs) were shown. The three hour TV transmission is available [here](#). The military equipment display starts around 2h14m; the nuclear capable carriers are seen from 2h20m onward.

An early-impression remark from *The Diplomat*: [North Korea’s 2017 Military Parade Was a Big Deal. Here Are the Major Takeaways](#)

Even though Pyongyang withheld from testing this weekend amid rumors of possible retaliation by the United States, North Korea is still looking to improve its missile know-how. Moreover, the long-dreaded ICBM flight test also might not be too far off now. Given the ever-growing number of TELs — both wheeled and tracked — North Korea may soon field nuclear forces amply large that a conventional U.S.-South Korea first strike may find it impossible to fully disarm Pyongyang of a nuclear retaliatory capability. That would give the North Korean regime what it’s always sought with its nuclear and ballistic missile program: an absolute guarantee against coercive removal.

The “absolute guarantee against coercive removal” would, in consequence, allow for much smaller conventional forces and less resources spend on the military. This again will enable faster economic development for the people in North Korea. The byongjin strategy will have reached its aim.

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