

**North Korean Nuclear Weapons**

**Selected Evidence Set**

**Debatable Issue**

**Should the United States contain and deter North Korea as a nuclear power, or should it use whatever means necessary, including military force, to eliminate its ability to threaten the U.S. with nuclear weapons?**

**These passages can be used as evidence to build arguments and counter-arguments on either side of the debatable issue.**

North Korean Nukes Should Be Accepted, Contained, and Deterred

“Yes, [North Korea] may soon be able to hit Los Angeles with a nuke, an option they would seriously consider if the regime was at stake. But Americans lived with a far greater threat [in the Soviet Union], for almost a half century. Like in the Cold War, the world may simply have to learn to “stop worrying and love the Bomb” (Atlantic Magazine Videos, “How North Korea Became a Crisis,” June 20, 2017).

“Together the United States, South Korea, and Japan have almost 40 percent of global GDP at their disposal; North Korea has less than 1 percent. The United States and South Korea (and Japan, too) have ample means to contain and deter North Korea. A combination of missile defense, conventional deterrence, and secure nuclear retaliatory forces—in theater and also in the United States—is more than sufficient to keep the peace on the Korean peninsula until such time as North Korea is willing to compromise, or it implodes” (Karl Walling, professor of military studies, U.S. Naval War College, Library of Law and Liberty, July 10, 2017).

“North Korea is a forbidding, mountainous place, its terrain perfect for hiding and securing things. Ever since 1953, the country’s security and the survival of the Kim dynasty have relied on military stalemate. Resisting the American threat—surviving a first strike with the ability to respond—has been a cornerstone of the country’s military strategy for three generations. And with only a few of its worst weapons, North Korea could, probably within hours, kill millions. This means an American first strike would likely trigger one of the worst mass killings in human history” (Mark Bowden, Atlantic Magazine, July/August, 2017).

“By most assessments, Mr. Kim is vicious and impetuous, but not irrational. Thus, while we quietly continue to refine our military options, we can rely on traditional deterrence by making crystal clear that any use of nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies would result in annihilation of North Korea” (Susan Rice, former National Security Adviser, New York Times, August 10, 2017).

“[Journalist Chris] Wallace mentioned the concern most people raise when they assess the risks of a U.S. military operation: The North Koreans could swiftly bombard South Koreans with artillery guns stationed in the Kaesong area near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)—roughly as far from the South Korean capital of Seoul**,** a sprawling metropolis of [25 million people](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/twenty-five-million-reasons-the-us-cant-strike-north-korea/2017/04/21/47df9fea-2513-11e7-928e-3624539060e8_story.html?tid=pm_world_pop&utm_term=.8245106573d7), as Baltimore is from Washington, D.C. ‘What the president has first and foremost on his mind is to protect the American people,’ McMaster said. Where that left the South Korean people, McMaster didn’t say. ‘If we were to launch a preemptive strike against their nuclear program, their missile program, we’re talking about human catastrophe, aren’t we?’ Wallace inquired. ‘Well, yes,’ McMaster replied” (Uri Friedman, Atlantic Magazine, May, 2017).

“This time isn’t any different from the North Korean side — they haven’t done that much different than in the past. Kim Jong Un may be testing more missiles, but essentially their behavior is not any different. The big thing we keep missing about North Korea is that their threats are always the second half of a sentence, and we ignore the first half. North Korea consistently says, 'If the United States attacks us first, we will fight back.' The only thing that gets reported in the U.S. media is the second clause, not the first. So their comments are clearly deterrent in nature, and the Guam 'threat' was exactly along those lines. So we always overhype the North Korean threat, because it is absolutely not a threat of preemptive or first strike” (David Kang, Dir. Korean Studies Institute, Univ. of Southern California, Washington Post, August 11, 2017).

“Which leads to the second part of a rational policy toward North Korea: classical nuclear deterrence. The next president should take steps, especially with China, to prevent Pyongyang from deploying a nuclear missile; but if that proves fruitless, he or she should make very clear that North Korea’s use of nuclear weapons—or even a conventional invasion of South Korea (which might be accompanied by a brandishing of nukes to deter anyone from coming to Seoul’s aid)—will be regarded as an attack on the United States and will be dealt with accordingly. There should be no ambiguity about this. Kim Jong-un may be crazy, but his eccentricities have always been in the service of his survival—and he should understand that he’s putting his survival on the line. Daniel Sneider, associate director of Stanford University’s Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, thinks we should deploy more nuclear-capable aircraft on U.S. bases in Asia to drive this point home fiercely” (Fred Kaplan, Slate Magazine, September 13, 2016).

“Some say containment and deterrence work only against rational actors—and that North Korea’s Kim Jong Un is crazy. Nonsense. He is crazy like a fox at preserving his power, meaning he is susceptible to Godfather-like offers he cannot refuse. Russia’s Josef Stalin was a ruthless fanatic. China’s Mao Zedong said many crazy-sounding things during the Cold War, just like Kim today. But there was no war. Unless Kim is suicidal, he may threaten, he may bluster, but he is no more likely to strike first than were Stalin or Mao” (Karl Walling, professor of military studies, U.S. Naval War College, Library of Law and Liberty, July 10, 2017).

North Korean Nukes Should Be Eliminated by the U.S.

“Accepting North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, even with a limited nuclear arsenal, would be a mistake.  A nuclear North Korea would result in significant nuclear proliferation in East Asia, with South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and others likely seeking their own nuclear weapons, regardless of extended nuclear deterrence commitments from the U.S.  A nuclear North Korea could also result in the accidental use of nuclear weapons because of miscalculation or error, with the potential that some of these weapons or nuclear fissile material could find its way to rogue states or non-state terrorist actors” (Joseph Detrani, former Deputy Direction of National Intelligence (2006), The Cipher Brief, August 2, 2017).

“With such missiles, Kim might feel emboldened to move on South Korea. Would the U.S. sacrifice Los Angeles to save Seoul? The same calculation drove the U.K. and France to develop their own nuclear weapons during the Cold War. Trump has already suggested that South Korea and Japan might want to consider building nuclear programs. In this way, acceptance could lead to more nuclear-armed states and ever greater chances that one will use the weapons” (Mark Bowden, Atlantic Magazine, July/August, 2017).

“Unfortunately, during the Obama administration, the North Koreans made rapid advancement in their nuclear program. We learned that the regime had conducted at least four nuclear tests, [constructed](https://www.wired.com/2010/11/surprise-north-korea-builds-a-huge-new-uranium-plant/) a uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon, worked to develop ballistic missiles that can deliver a nuclear warhead, and [constructed an experimental light water reacto](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/22/world/asia/progress-on-new-nuclear-reactor-in-north-korea.html)r. Obama's era of ‘strategic patience’ [failed](http://wapo.st/2vLR5uc) to halt North Korea's march toward nuclear capability. Even well before that, there had been no end of words, half measures and meaningless pacts . . . . Now the regime has made it clear that they have [no intention](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__wapo.st_2uwaUpd&d=DwMF-g&c=W8uiIUydLnv14aAum3Oieg&r=bGsD9sZg6ipuCv_GJ9ju7vGas8eG7EXsMzVsre9NrUc&m=AQAD73XQcLZ_L_BPbeR4w8mm9zT-UTks0WTTYxK7CIQ&s=_10n-zH_J1DM7C8HmqI3Tm0ysfho5WlS0duq62IyObo&e=) of denuclearization. Diplomacy has not worked with the madmen of Korea. It's time to replace tepid talk with tough talk. If North Korea does not halt its weapons program, it is indeed time to be ready with a ‘rain of ruin’ like they have never seen” (Alicia Stewart, “Brutal Talk Is Exactly What North Korea Needs to Hear,” CNN.com, August 12, 2017).

“The long-term challenge reaches beyond the threat to American territory to the prospect of nuclear chaos. An operational North Korean ICBM arsenal is still some time away given the need to miniaturize warheads, attach them to missiles, and produce them in numbers. But Asia’s nations are already under threat from North Korea’s existing short- and intermediate-range missiles. As this threat compounds, the incentive for countries like Vietnam, South Korea and Japan to defend themselves with their own nuclear weapons will grow dramatically—an ominous turn for the region and the world. Reversing the progress Pyongyang has already made is as crucial as preventing its further advancement” (Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State, Wall Street Journal, August 12, 2017).

“North Korea’s nuclear program poses another danger, perhaps the greatest one. Pyongyang may soon assume that it can now act more recklessly vis-à-vis South Korea *at the conventional level* and well short of a major attack because it can hypothetically counter the United States at the nuclear level” (Richard Bush, Senior Fellow, John L. Thornton China Center, “The Real Reason a North Korean Nuclear Weapon Is So Terrifying – and It’s Not What You Think,” Brookings Institute, August 8, 2017).

“Containment by itself is not enough; if we do not take additional action with North Korea, we or our allies will eventually become targets of North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction. Nothing short of a military attack can guarantee U.S. security. Unless we destroy their weapons facilities, they will continue to build nuclear weapons. Containment of North Korea will not address the underlying problem which is North Korea’s fears that its national security is at risk” (Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, North Korea and Nuclear Weapons – Policy Options. 2003).

[One reason North Korean nuclear weapons are so dangerous is the chance of] instability leading to a nuclear coup, nuclear civil war or bombs leaking beyond the North's borders. . . . . . North Korea could experience convulsions, perhaps because the military is fed up with the young leader pursuing policies contrary to its interests; new food shortages could lead to unrest and the unraveling of the government; or factional fighting between those supporting reform and others who want to maintain the status quo could break out. The more weapons Pyongyang has, the more dangerous instability becomes. Nuclear bombs could be pawns in a power struggle, even used by different factions against rivals, or they might simply disappear, smuggled abroad and sold to the highest bidder. Moreover, there is nothing that could be done to stop it from happening” (Joel Wit, Senior Fellow, US-Korea Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Atlantic Magazine, April, 2013).

“A North Korea retaining an interim weapons capability would institutionalize permanent risks: that a penurious Pyongyang might sell nuclear technology; that American efforts may be perceived as concentrating on protecting its own territory, while leaving the rest of Asia exposed to nuclear blackmail; that other countries may pursue nuclear deterrent against Pyongyang, one another or, in time, the U.S.; that frustration with the outcome will take the form of mounting conflict with China; that proliferation may accelerate in other regions. Substantial progress toward denuclearization—and its attainment in a brief period—is the most prudent course” (Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State, Wall Street Journal, August 12, 2017).