

# POLICY *focus*

RECIPES FOR RATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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## The Challenge of North Korea

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### Introduction

North Korea is building nuclear missiles with which it could very soon be able to reach the continental United States. North Korea must be stopped.

If not, then Americans will be living under the threat that North Korea might actually launch a nuclear attack on our shores, potentially inflicting damage and death on a scale that could dwarf the horrors of Sept. 11, 2001, or Pearl Harbor. Any such attack could be suicidal for North Korea, inviting massive U.S. retaliation. But given North Korea's long record of surprise attacks and utter disregard for civilized norms, it cannot be ruled out.

At the very least, North Korea will enjoy a vastly enhanced capacity for nuclear blackmail, able to extort concessions from the U.S., Japan and South Korea—which North Korea would like to subjugate under the banner of reunifying the Korean peninsula. North Korea's example will further embolden other heavily militarized despotisms with interests hostile to the U.S., notably Russia, China and Iran. There is also the grave danger that North Korea will sell its nuclear wares to rogue states or terrorist groups.

The only real remedy is an end to the North Korean regime. Officially, the U.S. and South Korea have no appetite for such an endgame, fearing a replay of the bloody 1950-53 Korean War. The U.S. has pursued diplomatic solutions, via combinations of talks, deals, passivity, threats and sanctions. All have failed (repeatedly), while North Korea has become ever more dangerous. The big question, as yet unanswered, is: Now what?

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## Why You Should Care

Americans need to understand the threat that North Korea poses to the U.S. and to other parts of the world. North Korea is a dynastic, totalitarian state, whose third-generation young tyrant, Kim Jong Un, has dramatically accelerated Pyongyang's programs for weapons of mass murder. This is the most acute crisis America now faces abroad.

- **North Korea is becoming a direct nuclear threat to the U.S. mainland.** Having carried out six increasingly powerful nuclear tests from 2006-2017, as well as successful tests last year of long-range rockets, North Korea will soon have the ability to target the U.S. mainland with nuclear-tipped missiles (if, indeed, it does not have this ability already.)
- **There is a big risk that North Korea's nuclear proliferation will spread.** North Korea has a record of selling its military wares to rogue, terror-sponsoring states, notably Syria and Iran.
- **North Korea's regime is the most repressive on earth,** ruinous and cruel to its own people, destabilizing and corrosive to any civilized 21st century world order.
- **All options for trying to defuse the threat of North Korea are fraught with risk.** Yet North Korea has become so dangerous that something must be done.

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## More Information

At the end of World War II, the U.S. and Soviet Union divided the Korean peninsula along the 38th parallel. They created two zones of control: American in the South, and Soviet in the North.

To rule North Korea, which was officially established in 1948 as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK, the Soviets installed a Korean protégé who had served in their army, Kim Il Sung. In 1950, with the support of China and the USSR, Kim launched the surprise invasion of the South that triggered the 1950-53 Korean War.

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Kim Il Sung's aim was to bring the entire Korean peninsula under Pyongyang's communist rule. Under auspices of the United Nations, the U.S. led an armed coalition that fought back. After three years of war that killed more than two million Koreans, some 600,000 Chinese and more than 36,000 Americans, the two sides signed an armistice that left the peninsula divided roughly where it was before the war began. Officially, the two sides remain at war, their militaries facing off along the North-South border, known as the Demilitarized Zone.

South Korea embraced capitalism, and developed from an impoverished dictatorship into a vibrant democracy and the world's 11th largest economy.

North Korea pursued communism, beggaring its people and relying for decades on support from the Soviet Union. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, North Korea's loss of Soviet largesse, combined with the gross inefficiencies of its collectivized, state-controlled economy, led to a

famine in the mid-1990s, in which an estimated one million or more North Koreans died. North Korea emerged in the new millennium with China as its chief patron and trading partner, though North Korea has also revived close ties to Moscow since Russia's President Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000.

The contrast between the two Koreas is a stark indictment of communism versus capitalism, tyranny versus freedom. A famous nighttime satellite photo shows the Korean peninsula ablaze in the South with lights, and in the North, a realm of darkness.

## North Korea's Regime

North Korea's regime is the most repressive on earth, a Korean offshoot of communism, which has survived into the 21st century under the jackboot of one family. North Korea's founding tyrant, "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung died in 1994, and was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong Il; who was in turn succeeded upon his death in 2011 by one of his sons, the current tyrant, Kim Jong Un.

Kim Jong Un presides over a ruling party, the Workers' Party of Korea, which hands down "guidance" and maintains minders and informants on virtually every level and aspect of existence, and is backed up by a system of prison camps, a Stalin-style gulag, to which people can be consigned, along with their entire families, for any sign of disloyalty.

Inmates of these prison camps are starved, tortured, worked to death, or in some cases executed. There are eyewitness accounts of newborns murdered in these camps because they were deemed "impure" by the prison guards.

In 2014, a United Nations Commission of Inquiry published an in-depth report on human rights in North Korea, accusing its officials of committing "crimes against humanity" as a matter of state policy. Among these crimes are: "extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence" as well as "knowingly causing prolonged starvation." The Commission concluded that "the gravity, scale and nature of the violations committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reveal a state that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world."

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Internationally, North Korea behaves as a violent criminal cartel. It has a long record of bankrolling its regime and advancing its interests through a mix of threats, extortion, terrorism, abductions, rackets, money laundering and weapons sales, as well as counterfeiting U.S. currency. In 1991, North Korea was admitted along with South Korea to membership in the United Nations—the UN has since become one of Pyongyang's platforms for threatening the U.S. with nuclear annihilation.

## The Threat Today

North Korea's regime aspires not only to ensure its own survival, but to subjugate South Korea, thus completing the conquest of the entire peninsula attempted by Kim Il Sung in 1950 when he started the Korean War. Today, Kim Jong Un describes this goal as the "final victory."

To these ends, North Korea is now arming itself with nuclear missiles that could reach the U.S. mainland, which North Korea has threatened to reduce to “ashes and darkness.”

**To help deter any North Korean attack on the South, America keeps 28,500 troops and their families stationed in South Korea, serving alongside the South Korean military.**

To date, North Korea has conducted six increasingly powerful underground nuclear tests, in 2006, 2009, 2013, two in 2016 and the most recent in 2017—which it plausibly claimed was a hydrogen bomb, vastly more powerful than the atomic bomb the U.S. dropped in 1945 on Hiroshima. Last year North Korea also carried out three successful tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles, brazenly launching one of them over Japan.

To help deter any North Korean attack on the South, America keeps 28,500 troops and their families stationed in South Korea, serving alongside the South Korean military. There’s a strong likelihood that once North Korea can reliably target the U.S. with nuclear missiles, it will try to pressure the U.S. into abandoning South Korea, amounting to a mortally dangerous game of chicken.

North Korea is now producing both plutonium and highly enriched uranium for nuclear bomb fuel. It also maintains arsenals of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, and has been rapidly refining its ability for cyber warfare, well beyond the talents displayed in North Korea’s 2014 hacking of U.S.-based Sony Pictures.

It’s likely that North Korea will sell its nuclear wares abroad, especially to the Middle East. North Korea has already been caught helping Syria build a secret nuclear reactor, with no visible purpose except to produce plutonium (that reactor was destroyed in 2007 by an Israeli air strike). North Korea has also collaborated for years with Iran on the development of ballistic missiles, for which the only real cost-effective use is to carry nuclear warheads.

## **U.S. Policy**

America in its efforts to stop North Korea’s nuclear program over the past quarter century has relied on a mix of diplomacy and sanctions. Both have failed, repeatedly, to stop North Korea’s march toward nuclear weapons. In exchange for bountiful concessions, North Korea agreed to nuclear climb-down deals in 1994, 2005 and 2007, then cheated and walked away.

For years, the U.N. and the U.S. have been piling sanctions on North Korea, but while sanctions can hurt North Korea’s economy, Kim Jong Un’s priority is nurturing his nuclear weapons, not his people.

Under President Obama, the U.S. followed a policy dubbed “strategic patience,” which amounted to passivity, punctuated by scoldings and new rounds of sanctions.

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Under President Trump, the U.S. has scrapped strategic patience for a tougher policy of “maximum pressure.” This includes treating the North Korean nuclear threat as a top priority of U.S. foreign policy, imposing new layers of sanctions, prominently denouncing North Korea’s human rights abuses and providing displays of military force, such as the three U.S. aircraft carriers sent to the region last year. It has also included the message that if the stronger sanctions do not work, America is not ruling out a military attack.

## What Can Be Done?

**The only real solution is to get rid of the source of this growing nuclear threat: the Kim regime itself.**

Talks, deals and diplomacy in general have all proven colossal failures. Sanctions can hurt North Korea, but the official aim of these sanctions is to bring North Korea back to the bargaining table. North Korea’s time-honored method at the bargaining table, however, is to buy time, wrest concessions, and break its word.

The only real solution is to get rid of the source of this growing nuclear threat: the Kim regime itself. But how? No one wants a replay of the Korean War, even less so with a North Korea armed with nuclear weapons. Is there another way?

Ultimately, the U.S. mission should not be to try to manage North Korea’s regime, but to bring it down—ideally aiming to reunify the Korean peninsula under the government of democratic South Korea.

## Beware North Korean “Charm” Offensives

When North Korean tyrant Kim Jong Un sent his sister, Kim Yo Jong, to the opening ceremonies of the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in South Korea, her visit—complete with her enigmatic smile—provoked great speculation in the media that this might prove a step on a road to peace.

Beware. In reality, the smiling Kim Yo Jong is a deputy director of North Korea’s powerful and omnipresent Propaganda and Agitation Department and has been blacklisted by the U.S. Treasury due to her ties to “notorious human rights abuses.”

Such “charm” offensives by North Korea are nothing new. Pyongyang’s totalitarian regime made a similar bid to present itself with a human face in 2014, when its diplomats tried to blunt criticism over North Korea’s human rights abuses by way of presentations describing North Korea as a human-rights paradise.

Periodically, North Korea engages in such maneuvers. They serve chiefly to gull Western policy makers into their own friendly overtures, easing of penalties and offering of concessions. North Korea takes whatever it can get, and carries on with its abuses, threats and nuclear missile program.

**North Korea takes whatever it can get, and carries on with its abuses, threats and nuclear missile program.**

# What You Can Do

## Get Informed

Learn more about the threat of North Korea's monstrous regime. Visit:

- [The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea](#)
- [Wisconsin Project On Nuclear Arms Control: North Korea](#)
- [Institute for Science and International Security: Korean Peninsula Reports](#)

## Talk to Your Friends

Help your friends and family understand these important issues. Tell them about what's going on and encourage them to join you in getting involved.

## Become a Leader in the Community

Get a group together each month to talk about a political/policy issue (it will be fun!). Write a letter to the editor. Show up at local government meetings and make your opinions known. Go to rallies. Better yet, organize rallies! A few motivated people can change the world.

## Remain Engaged Politically

Too many good citizens see election time as the only time they need to pay attention to politics. We need everyone to pay attention and hold elected officials accountable. Let your Representatives know your opinions. After all, they are supposed to work for you!

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### ABOUT INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

Independent Women's Forum (IWF) is dedicated to building support for free markets, limited government, and individual responsibility.

IWF, a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) research and educational institution, seeks to combat the too-common presumption that women want and benefit from big government, and build awareness of the ways that women are better served by greater economic freedom. By aggressively seeking earned media, providing easy-to-read, timely publications and commentary, and reaching out to the public, we seek to cultivate support for these important principles and encourage women to join us in working to return the country to limited, Constitutional government.

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