
North Korea

- ✓ **Can the U.S. and North Korea achieve normalized relations as long as the Kim Dynasty remains in power?**
- ✓ **Under what circumstances should the U.S. consider opening negotiations on sanctions with North Korea?**
- ✓ **How dangerous would a nuclear-capable North Korea be for the U.S. and the world?**

Facts

Population: 25 million (2015 est.).

GDP: \$28 billion (2013 est.).

Leader: Kim Jong Un, 32, chairman of the Worker's Party and supreme leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Armed Forces: 1,200,000 active, 7,700,000 reserves (2015 est.).

Important Dates.

1945: Korea is split into the North and South following its emancipation from Japanese control after WWII. Control of the South is given to the U.S.; the North is put under the jurisdiction of the U.S.S.R.

1948: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is founded.

1950–53: The Korean War begins after the leader of North Korea, Kim Il Sung, authorizes an invasion of the South in order to “reunify” the peninsula.

1991: Both North and South Korea join the United Nations.

1998: North Korea tests a long-range missile for the first time.

2003: North Korea withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

2006: North Korea is first reported to test its nuclear program.

2011: Kim Jong Un takes control of the North Korean government after the death of his father, Kim Jong Il.

Foreign Relations and Trade.

North Korea aligned itself with the Soviet Union and China during the Cold War. It has remained at odds with the Western world, continuing to defy economic sanctions meant to slow down its nuclear program, though such measures have left the country economically weak and isolated. North Korea's major trading partner is China. Trade has also opened up with South Korea in recent years.

Current U.S. Policy

Preventing a Nuclear North Korea.

Most current U.S. policy with regard to North Korea deals with curtailing development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. President Barack Obama made efforts to open relations with Kim Jong Un, but the administration recently placed sanctions directly on Kim and other top officials for the first time. Pyongyang responded by cutting off its only diplomatic channel with the U.S.

North Korea began developing its nuclear program after withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, citing hostile U.S. policy. Harsh rhetoric between the U.S. and North Korea tends to escalate rapidly after North Korean nuclear tests. The Obama administration has appealed to China as North Korea's closest and most supportive ally, urging Beijing to work to disarm its neighbor. But recent developments in the South China Sea have cooled Chinese-U.S. relations, and China also opposes plans for deployment of the U.S. Army's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (Thaad), an advanced anti-ballistic missile system, in South Korea.

Candidate Positions



Hillary Clinton favors punitive sanctions against the North Korean regime in response to continued nuclear tests, saying that belligerence must be met with “an unmistakable message that [Pyongyang’s] nuclear brinksmanship won’t succeed.” Clinton supports the creation of stronger missile defense systems by the U.S. and allies to counter the North Korean nuclear threat. She has urged China to be more assertive in pressuring its neighbor to end missile testing. She denies the possibility of negotiations with North Korea until the country dismantles its nuclear program and improves its human rights record.

As secretary of state, Mrs. Clinton supported the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia,” one element of which involved bolstering the military resources of North Korea’s neighbors. During her tenure, a multilateral sanctions regime was established against the country in response to failed multi-party talks and missile testing.



Donald Trump has expressed willingness to meet face to face with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un as part of his approach to dismantling the country's nuclear program. This would make him the first world leader to meet with Kim. Still, Mr. Trump locates the onus of responsibility for discouraging North Korea's nuclear policy with China, and has said that if a Chinese solution is not forthcoming, the U.S. "should make trade very difficult" for Beijing. Mr. Trump also expresses support for allowing nations like Japan and South Korea to develop their own nuclear programs as deterrents. In his book *The America We Deserve* (2000), Mr. Trump wrote in favor of a pre-emptive strike should the regime refuse to discontinue its nuclear program.

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