North Korean Crisis

What is the issue?

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- Since its current leader, Kim Jong-Un, took power in 2011, North Korea has ramped up its efforts to build a long-range nuclear missile capable of hitting targets around the globe.
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- In a show of force aimed at discouraging the North from launching another test, the United States recently ordered an aircraft carrier and other warships to the Korean Peninsula.
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How the Partition of Korea happened?

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- Japan annexed the Korean peninsula in 1910, and the country spent the next 35 years under Japanese military rule.
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- With Japan’s defeat in World War II, U.S. troops landed in the southern part of the peninsula, while Soviet forces secured the area northern part of 38 N latitude (or the 38th parallel).
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- As communism took firm hold in the north, **Kim Il-Sung** (Kim Jong-Un’s grandfather) emerged as the first premier of the newly established Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948.
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- Meanwhile, the UN General Assembly sanctioned elections held in the south, adoption of a constitution and the inauguration of the Republic of Korea, with Seoul as its capital.
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What happened during Korean War?

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- Tensions between the two governments and their powerful allies erupted into war in 1950, when **Soviet-backed North Korean troops invaded the South.**
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- Fighting in the Korean War ended in July 1953, with the peninsula still divided into two hostile states.
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- A **2.5-mile-wide demilitarized zone** separates North Korea from South Korea, roughly following the 38th parallel for 150 miles across the peninsula.
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- Established according to the terms of the 1953 armistice, this once-devastated battleground is now essentially a nature preserve, covered by forests, estuaries and wetlands housing hundreds of bird, fish and mammal species.
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What is the history of dictatorship in North Korea?

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- Installed by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1948, Kim Il-Sung remained in office until his death in 1994.
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- During his nearly 50-year reign, a powerful cult of personality emerged around the man North Koreans referred to, variously, as **Great Leader, Heavenly Leader and even the "Sun."**
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- A new calendar was introduced, which used 1912—the year of Kim Il-Sung's birth—as year one.
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- Every elementary school in the country was equipped with a special training room where young children were indoctrinated in the regime's teachings.
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- **In 1998, North Korea's constitution was amended to proclaim Kim Il-Sung the Eternal President of the Republic, and the anniversaries of both his birth and death are considered national holidays.**
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- His son, Kim Jong-Il, was the centre of a similar cult, with some North Koreans convinced he was powerful enough to control the weather.
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- Hundreds of memorial statues dedicated to the Kim's dot the countryside, and despite a series of devastating famines and systemic poverty, a massive mausoleum was built on the outskirts of Pyongyang to house the embalmed bodies of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il, now permanently on display like many autocratic leaders before them.
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Why North Korea is considered a 'hermit kingdom'?

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- North Korea has **remained isolated from the international community,** with its governmental, economic and other operations veiled in secrecy.
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- Restrictions on travel into or out of the country and a tightly controlled press helped maintain this isolation.
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- North Korea's foreign policy has been marked by two significant alliances, **with China and the Soviet Union,** and by enduring hostility to South Korea and the United States.
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- The USSR's collapse in the early 1990s left China as the country's most important ally, but the pattern of defiant statements and aggressive actions by the young, erratic Kim Jong-Un over the course of his reign has steadily weakened this alliance.
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- More recently, North Korea and Russia have developed increasingly close diplomatic (and economic) ties.
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- **In 2017, Russia topped** the list of countries friendly towards North Korea for the third straight year.
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What about North Korea's pursuit with nuclear weapons?

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- The DPRK has an **active nuclear weapons program and tested nuclear explosive devices** in 2006, 2009, 2013, and twice in 2016.
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- It is also **capable of enriching uranium** and producing weapons-grade

plutonium.
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- North Korea deploys short- and medium-range ballistic missiles and successfully launched long-range rockets in 2012 and 2016.
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- Pyongyang unilaterally withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in January 2003 and is not a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) or a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).
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- The DPRK is not a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and is believed to possess a large chemical weapons program.
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- North Korea is a party to the **Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)** and Geneva Protocol, but is suspected of maintaining an offensive weapons program in defiance of the BTWC.
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- North Korea's interest in a nuclear weapons program dates to the end of World War II.
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- Since then, Pyongyang developed a nuclear fuel cycle capability and has both plutonium and enriched uranium programs capable of producing fissile material.
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- North Korea declared it had roughly 38.5 kg of weapons-grade plutonium extracted from spent fuel rods in May 2008, however external estimates have varied.
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- **The Six-Party Talks** between North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and the United States began in 2003 with the goal of **denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula**. However, these talks have been suspended since April 2009.
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- Initial uncertainties about North Korea's nuclear program after the death of Kim Jong II were tempered when Pyongyang agreed to suspend nuclear tests, uranium enrichment, and long-range missile tests in exchange for food aid from the U.S. on February 29, 2012.
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- However, after a dispute with the United States over the launch of a rocket in April 2012, North Korea declared the agreement void, and conducted a nuclear test in February 2013.
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- In April 2013, North Korean state media announced that Pyongyang would

restart all nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, including its 5MW graphite-moderated reactor, and uranium enrichment plant.
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- By August 2013, satellite imagery confirmed steam venting from the 5MW reactor's turbine and generator building.
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- The reactor is capable of producing 6 kg of plutonium a year, however, it is not clear how the modified cooling system, and repeated shutdowns will affect production.
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- In September 2015, however, state media announced that all nuclear facilities were in normal operation with ongoing missions to improve the “quality and quantity” of the country’s nuclear stockpile.
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- Kim Jong Un also claimed to have **thermonuclear capabilities** during his December 2015 visit to the Pyongchon Revolutionary Site.
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- **On January 6, 2016 North Korea conducted a fourth nuclear test.** Despite the test, and subsequent claim it was a hydrogen bomb, experts continue to doubt North Korea’s thermonuclear capabilities.
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- The test prompted widespread international condemnation. Even China, a traditional ally of the regime, endorsed a UN resolution to apply further sanctions against North Korea.
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- On September 9, 2016, the anniversary of the founding of North Korea, the U.S. Geological Survey detected a 5.3 magnitude earthquake at North Korea's nuclear testing site.
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- North Korea quickly confirmed it had carried out a **5th nuclear test** in a defiant statement. The test drew sharp international condemnation.
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- China, again, joined in condemning the test and urged the regime to refrain from provocative actions.
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- North Korea on **March, 2017** launched four ballistic missiles from a region near North Korea's border with China.
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What is the current standoff?

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- On **12th April 2017**, reports began circulating that North Korea was poised to carry out an **underground nuclear weapon test.**
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- On 15th April, North Korea held a huge military parade to celebrate the “Day of the Sun.”
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- The spectacle featured among other things, large canisters that analysts said could be carrying **new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)** that could one day be capable of hitting the United States.
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- Kim said, "If the United States wages reckless provocation against us, our revolutionary power will instantly counter with annihilating strike, and we will respond to full-out war with full-out war and to nuclear war with our style of nuclear strike warfare."
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- The chest-pounding threat was somewhat undercut a few hours later when the North Korean military attempted a missile launch — only to see it blow up "almost immediately," according to US military officials.
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- What was intended to be a strong, defiant show of force quickly became an **international embarrassment.**
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- Similarly, the US military announced in early March that it had officially begun the deployment of the **THAAD anti-ballistic missile defence system** in South Korea.
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- THAAD, which stands for **Terminal High Altitude Area Defence,** is a system that’s already deployed in Guam on an “expeditionary” basis, and is now being deployed in South Korea to protect against any incoming missiles from the North.
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- And despite it being a highly controversial move that has angered China and even some in South Korea, Trump clearly agreed with his predecessor that deploying THAAD was an important part of the strategy to protect the close US ally from any threat by North Korea.
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- Trump seemed to be following the same basic policies that the Obama administration did, albeit slightly more aggressively.
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- On April 9, just days after the last North Korean missile test, the Trump administration announced it was sending the **97,000-ton USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier,** along with a guided-missile cruiser and two destroyers, to the waters off the Korean Peninsula.

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- That kind of military move on the part of the US lends some serious heft to the Trump administration’s forceful public statements.
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- An aircraft carrier heading your way sends a **stern message to North Korea.**
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- All of this means that the long standing North Korea situation may now be entering a new level of crisis.
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- Trump’s recent actions in Syria and Afghanistan seem to be signalling, he’s not afraid to use force to get his message across, irrespective. How the unruly North Korean outlaw will ultimately respond remains to be seen.
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What is the way forward?

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- For all the talk of naval strike groups and pre-emptive military action, Donald Trump's **only option to solve the North Korean crisis could be compromise.**
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- The situation is extraordinarily complicated and not amenable to either simple solutions or one-off ad-hoc interventions designed to demonstrate American strength.
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- Kim could easily launch a retaliatory strike against Seoul, the South Korean capital of 10 million people that sits 25 miles from the North Korean border, analysts point out.
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- **UN resolutions and unilateral sanctions imposed on North Korea have so far failed** to deter it from conducting nuclear and missile tests.
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- In so far as North Korea is concerned, clearly, the road to Pyongyang lies through Beijing.
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- Not only does China account for 80% of North Korea’s trade but more important, it can exercise direct leverage if it reduces or altogether cuts off imports of coal from North Korea.
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- If **Beijing were to aggressively clamp down on all its trade** with Pyongyang, North Korea would certainly feel the pain - and possibly collapse.

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- China has already sent some positive signals after the recent crisis, US can use them as leverage for trade concessions with china which Trump in his election campaign vigorously attacked China for its unfair trade practices.
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