



China's message of friendship to North Korea belies nuclear concerns

A congratulatory message from China on a North Korea anniversary masked major disagreements between the two countries.

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Chinese President [Xi Jinping](#) sent a message of good wishes to [North Korea's Kim Jong Un](#) ahead of a Pyongyang anniversary, but recent analysis indicates disagreements over nuclear weapons are overshadowing ties between China and North Korea.

North Korea's state-controlled media outlet KCNA said Tuesday Xi and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang had sent [Kim Jong Un](#) and top North Korean official Kim Yang Gon a congratulatory message a day ahead of the 67th anniversary of the founding of the Pyongyang government, South Korean news network YTN reported.

Xi said in his message China and North Korea are two countries that are working for healthy and stable development in the long term, and cooperation between Beijing and Pyongyang would contribute to peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Beijing also reminded North Korea of the traditional ties between the two countries cultivated under previous leaders.

China's message to the North Korean leadership did not betray the deeper concerns Beijing has about Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program and its lack of initiative in reforming its economy.

Xi and South Korean President Park Geun-hye had agreed last week to work together toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and called for the resumption of the six-party talks -- a historical agreement between the two countries.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C., wrote China has been working toward North Korea denuclearization, but the issue also is the "worst disagreement between them," Yonhap reported.

Bandow said an unidentified Chinese scholar had said China insists on peaceful dialogue, and it could be feasible if there was closer coordination between Beijing and Washington, while warning that "North Korea is an extreme country."

[CNN reported](#) Monday an interview with a recent North Korean defector revealed that Kim is losing the trust and support of his power base, but collapse was unlikely while the North Korean leader remains alive.