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North Korea reveal: Why Kim Jong-Un needs nuclear weapons to survive

By Ted Jeffery

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He is the author of several books including *Tripwire: Korea and US Foreign Policy in a Changed World*. The idea of South Korea expanding its nuclear artillery is backed by many of its citizens. Mr Bandow suggested a South Korean warhead would also help constrain China.

In recent weeks, North Korea has still been ramping up tensions between the two countries.

It has threatened military action against its Southern counterpart after North Korean defectors sent anti-Kim Jong-Un propaganda leaflets across the border.

This isn't being viewed as unusual behaviour from the two sides.

Animosity on the Korean peninsula goes back to just after World War 2 and how The Kim family dynasty emerged from its Soviet occupation.

Kim il Sun was chosen as a leader despite speaking very little Korean.

Doug Bandow mentions how the North's economy stagnated and its people starved, while Beijing's post-Mao transformation and the Soviet Union's collapse deprived the North of its military backers.

Many years on, the Kim dynasty is still in place and needs its nuclear weapons to guard against regime change according to Mr Bandow.

There was a great deal of media speculation as to the whereabouts of the North Korean leader last month.

However, he re-emerged at the back end of May and immediately chaired a session of the Central Military Commission on "new policies for further increasing the nuclear war deterrence" of North Korea.

Amid this decision, there has also been the elevation of Kim's sister, Kim Yo-Jong, who has been at the centre of aggressive rhetoric and threats with the South.

She was reportedly behind the blowing up of the Inter-Korean liaison centre last week.

It was built back in 2018, and its destruction a few weeks ago has been treated as a way of North Korea trying to cut all forms of communication off with the South.

However, according to Daily NK Kim Yo-Jong's rhetoric is only a means of her trying to prove the Kim regime that she is a worthy successor to her brother.

The Pentagon report “Nuclear Deterrence: America’s Foundation and Backstop for National Defense” lumps North Korea (and nukes-Iran) together with Russia and China as justifying the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Pyongyang’s tests, notes the Pentagon report “pose a threat to the U.S. homeland and our allies”.

The DPRK is modest nuclear power, with an estimated 20 to 30 warheads.

The regime itself only produces enough nuclear material for up to 12 weapons annually.

Drew Walter, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defence for nuclear matters, admitted as much last month, saying that North Korea is “not yet on the scale of some of our other nuclear-armed potential adversaries.”

So, he said, “I don’t foresee very exquisite new capabilities to deter North Korea in that sense.”