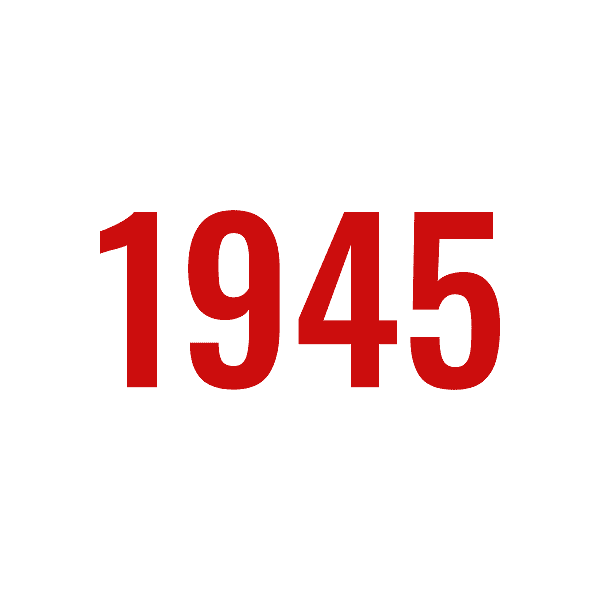
****

**North Korea Says It Will Never Give Up Nuclear Weapons: What 11 Experts Told Us**

Ted Galen Carpenter

September 12, 2022

Kim Jong-un’s statement that North Korea will [never give up](https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2022/09/09/north-korea-kim-jong-un-nuclear-weapons/8035792001/) its nuclear weapons should not have come as a surprise to anyone.

Since the country has [officially declared](https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/09/asia/north-korea-kim-nuclear-weapons-state-law-intl-hnk/index.html) that it is now a nuclear-weapons power, the United States and its allies need to move on from the quixotic goal of getting Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear ambitions.  For nearly three decades, Washington has led an international effort to isolate North Korea until it agrees to a complete, verifiable, and irreversible end to its nuclear program.

That unrealistic demand has prevented the development of a normal relationship between the two countries, thereby exacerbating tensions in an already volatile geopolitical environment. Indeed, the insistence on total denuclearization was the main factor that torpedoed President Donald Trump’s initially promising effort to achieve a rapprochement with the Hermit Kingdom.

Biden administration policymakers need to accept the reality that North Korea is unlikely ever to give up its small nuclear arsenal. Kim and his associates fully comprehend how the United States treats nonnuclear adversaries. Washington’s regime-change wars against Serbia, Iraq, Libya, and Syria highlighted the danger of not possessing a nuclear deterrent.

The [Libya episode](https://www.cato.org/commentary/libya-forgotten-reason-north-korea-desperately-wants-nuclear-weapons) was especially enlightening to North Korea’s leaders. When Muammar Qaddafi relinquished his country’s embryonic nuclear program, the United States and its Western allies responded by lifting sanctions and readmitting Libya to various multilateral institutions. However, just a few years later, Washington and other NATO powers helped insurgents overthrow Qaddafi’s regime, leading to the dictator’s torture and brutal execution.

It is unrealistic to expect Kim to put his neck into a similar noose.

Like it or not, North Korea is now a member of the exclusive global nuclear-weapons club, and it will remain so.

[*Ted Galen Carpenter*](https://www.cato.org/people/ted-galen-carpenter)*, Senior Fellow, CATO Institute.*