



North Korea Now Seen as a Top Threat Facing the United States

Karl Friedhoff, Fellow, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy
Dina Smeltz, Senior Fellow, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

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On July 28, 2017, North Korea successfully tested its second intercontinental ballistic missile—the first coming just weeks earlier on July 4—confirming that it can reliably launch a missile with the range to strike the United States. These tests put them well ahead of most predicted timelines, and have sent the United States scrambling for an appropriate response.

The 2017 Chicago Council Survey finds that the US public also senses an increased threat from North Korea's nuclear program, rating it one of the top threats facing the United States. Nine in ten Americans reject the idea that North Korea should be allowed to produce nuclear weapons. While Americans broadly support sanctions against North Korea and against Chinese banks and companies that do business with North Korea, they continue to have little appetite for overt military action.

North Korea Now a Top Threat

Three-quarters of Americans (75%) now say that North Korea's nuclear program is a critical threat facing the United States, placing it among the top threats facing the country. Concern over North Korea's nuclear program has spiked 15 percentage points since 2016 (60%) and 20 percent from 2015 (55%). This is the largest increase over the past year in any of the potential threats included in the 2017 survey.

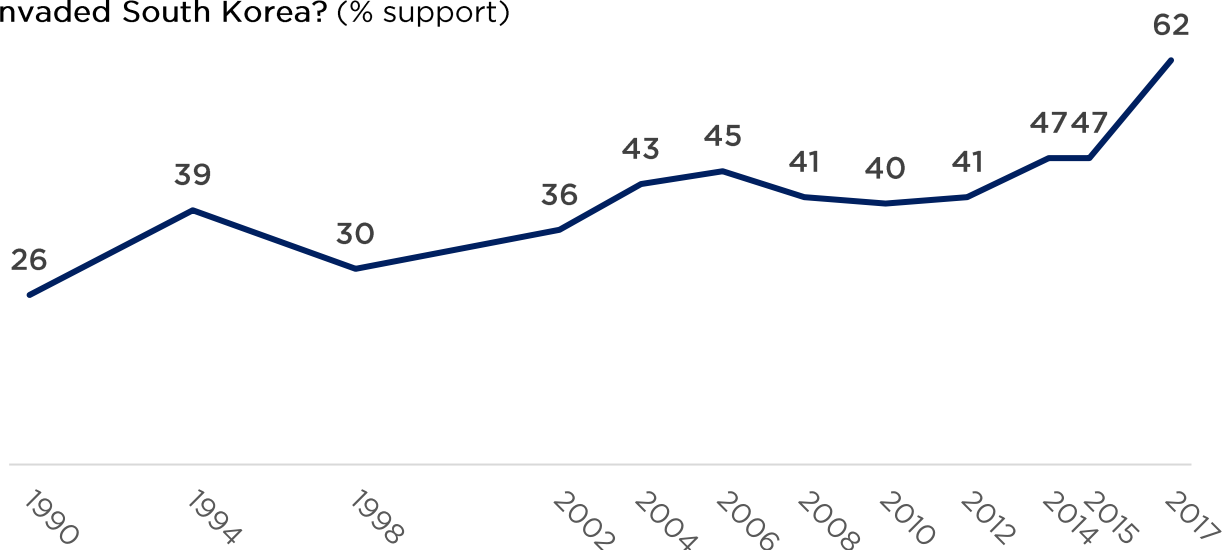
Americans Solidify Support for South Korea

The public's sense of a heightened threat from North Korea has also strengthened their expressed commitment to US ally South Korea if it were attacked by North Korea. In Chicago Council Surveys since 1990, steadily increasing percentages—but fewer than half—have favored using US troops to defend South Korea in the event of

an attack by North Korea. In the 2017 survey, for the first time a majority of Americans express support for using US forces to defend South Korea (62%, up from 47% in 2015).

Support for US Forces to Defend South Korea

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops if North Korea invaded South Korea? (% support)



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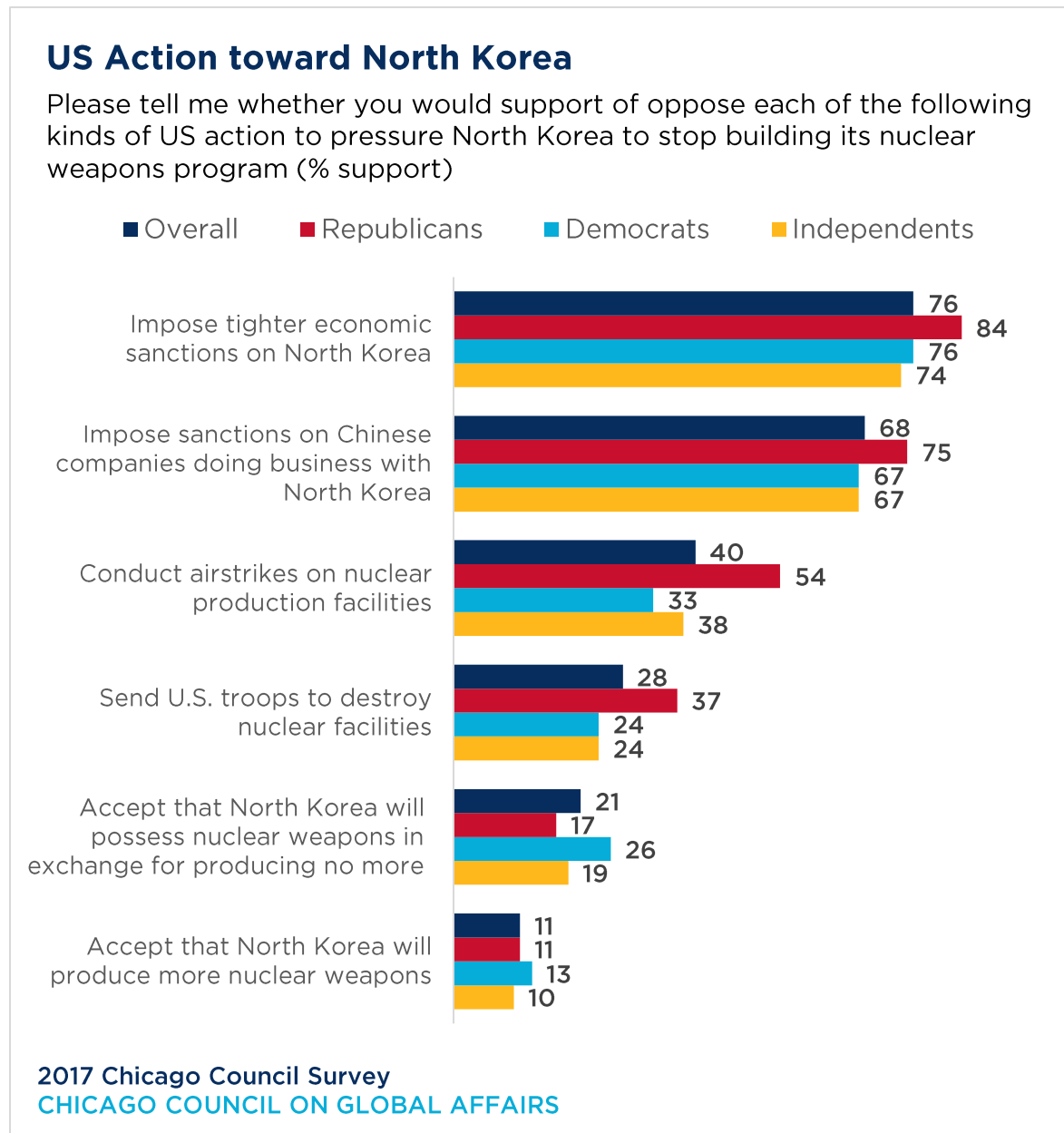
Policy Options on North Korea

Policy options on North Korea are constrained, and no administration has been able to successfully convince North Korea to cease its nuclear and missile programs. While there has been ongoing debate among experts about accepting a North Korea with nuclear weapons in exchange for an agreement guaranteeing it will not produce more of them, only 21 percent of the American public—17 percent of Republicans and 26 percent of Democrats—say they support this option. Even fewer are willing to simply accept that North Korea will produce more nuclear weapons (11%; 11% of Republicans, 13% Democrats).

While sanctions have yet to slow North Korea's progress, increasing sanctions is the option that receives the most support from the American public (76%). On this, there is strong partisan agreement. While 84 percent of Republicans support this approach, 76 percent of Democrats agree. There is also strong support (68%) for placing sanctions on Chinese banks and companies that do business with North Korea.

Military action carries with it the very real risk of retaliation and escalation, and as in past surveys, lacks public support. Overall, 28 percent of Americans favor sending US troops to destroy North Korea's nuclear facilities and 40 percent favor conducting airstrikes against North Korea's nuclear production facilities.

But there are partisan differences on these potential responses, most notably on airstrikes. A majority of Republicans (54%) support such airstrikes versus 33 percent of Democrats. Republicans (37%) are also more likely than Democrats (24%) to favor sending US troops to destroy DPRK's nuclear facilities, though still a minority.



No Love Lost for Kim Jong Un

In the United States, there is no love for North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un. His frequent portrayals in the media cast him as a madman, making him notorious for missiles, nuclear weapons, threats to the United States, and human rights abuses. Accordingly, just 6 percent of the American public holds a favorable view of Kim. Nine in ten (91%) hold unfavorable views of him, with 79 percent holding very unfavorable views. This makes him the least favorable leader included in the survey. By contrast, a majority (54%) hold a favorable view of South Korean President Moon Jae-In.

About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

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About the Chicago Council Survey

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2017 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy. The 2017 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel between June 27 and July 19, 2017 among a weighted national sample of 2,020 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error is ± 2.4 percentage points.

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