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Is a Nuclear North Korea Inevitable?

By STEVEN FALCO
STAFF WRITER

In a meeting with President Trump last November, President Obama described North Korea as our country's biggest national security threat. Given that Kim Jong Un has threatened to carry out a nuclear strike on our nation for years and has failed to follow through, Obama's concern seems overblown. However, the "hermit kingdom" has recently upgraded its weapons system and is becoming the imminent danger many fear. Unfortunately, we may now be powerless. It is probably too late to take decisive action without accepting an enormous death toll, even though passivity will bind us to an intolerable future.

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A country needs three technologies for nuclear capabilities: the ability to make nuclear weapons, the technology to develop missiles with sufficient range to strike their targets, and the capacity to miniaturize a bomb to fit on a missile. In each of these, North Korea has gone from unimpressive to terrifying in just a few years. Most significantly, in July, it demonstrated that it has intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). On America's Independence Day, the North Koreans launched their first ICBM, which missile expert David Wright claimed "would not be enough to reach the lower 48 states or the large islands of Hawaii, but would allow it to reach all of Alaska." Only a few weeks later, they ran another test. According to Wright, that missile might be able to reach as far as New York City. Lack of range has long impeded North Korea's nuclear goals, but in a single month they surpassed their previous record twice.

In addition to extending the range of their missiles, the North Koreans have also been boosting the power of their weapons. This month, they apparently tested a hydrogen bomb, a weapon far more powerful than the fission-based atomic weapons they constructed previously. America's nuclear commander John E. Hyten assumed that this report was accurate due to findings by seismologists indicating the bomb had a yield of at least 100 kilotons. This is far more powerful than the one tested in 2016. The range of North Korea's missiles and the potency of its bombs mean little unless it can actually get the bombs onto the missiles. While most experts agree that the nation is currently unable to mount the bombs, the rate of progress suggests that this final step is probably not too far off. *The New Yorker* magazine summarizes the current state of affairs: "North Korea has between twenty and sixty usable nuclear warheads,

and ICBMs capable of hitting targets as far away, perhaps, as Chicago. It has yet to marry those two programs in a single weapon, but American intelligence agencies estimate that it will achieve that within a year." If such predictions are accurate, North Korea is on the verge of gaining the power to kill millions of Americans and destroy several of our cities at the push of a button. And in the future, North Korea has the capacity to enlarge its total stockpile of weapons and replace weaker

old ones with new hydrogen bombs even if there is no significant scientific progress.

This dire situation may tempt the United States to push for an

immediate, preemptive response to take the weapons out before they can harm us. *The New York Times* recently examined our options. The possibilities are a limited strike, a comprehensive strike or an all-out war. Sadly, the author concluded that limited action would be too weak to matter and a comprehensive strike, would likely force America and our allies to accept massive casualties. As the author of the piece, Max Fisher, put it: "Strikes short of war would risk deepening, rather than altering, this calculus. Strikes that lead to war would risk exactly the nuclear exchange they are meant to forestall."

Our defensive options aren't much better. Despite spending decades and billions of dollars on nuclear defense, our current technology is only partially effective. The anti-missile systems are not sufficient to defend us from multiple missiles. Furthermore, efforts to force China to keep its ally under control are pointless. As James Clapper, former Director of National Intelligence, has stated: "Whether it's pressuring, threatening, negotiating, or trying to leverage China, everybody's tried all of that—and it's not working." We should continue improving missile defense, talking to China, and searching for military strategies, but there is little reason to be optimistic about any of these paths.

Because of the advanced nature of North Korea's nuclear program and the futility of both offensive and defensive measures, some have begun to ask whether we must simply accept a nuclear North Korea. Given that one of the country's representatives just spoke of reducing "the US mainland into ashes and darkness," this, too, sounds like a dangerous option. In any case, barring major unforeseen events, a truly nuclear North Korea will arrive sooner than we think. If this occurs, we must hope that Kim Jong Un is saner than he appears.

Men's Rights Activists

By JULIA DUPUIS
STAFF WRITER

Following her appointment as Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos made headlines by meeting with organizations affected by Title IX, groups that included the self-declared "Men's Rights Activists." Her actions prompted a swift backlash from feminist groups, many of whom declared it a "slap in the face" to rape victims.

When people think of men's rights activists, the image of a lonely, insecure white man lurking in online chat rooms and raging about feminism comes to mind. Although most of the MRAs are in fact white men, these activists come from different backgrounds and often include women.

While collectively described as MRA, the movement is really a loose coalition of various online communities, the most notorious or well-known of which are "The Red Pill" forum on Reddit and the popular website A Voice For Men. In these spaces, MRAs question the validity of the "male privilege" concept and claim that today's society is gynocentric, or focused on women. They argue that men are subject to discrimination and disadvantages on the basis of their gender. This strain of activism originally emerged in the 1970s as a response to second-wave feminism. But now, online communication has allowed the MRA movement to gain significant traction—growing from

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a fringe phenomenon to a widespread campaign recognized in the political sphere.

Men's Rights Activists seem to make some valid points about gender relations. Their beliefs are even parallel to feminism in certain respects—recognizing the reality of gender discrimination and seeking equality. But they are not identifying the real cause of the problems they cite.

There are certainly issues that disproportionately affect men. Male victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are taken less seriously. Suicide rates are higher among men, as is the rate of homelessness. Fathers are given less prominence in their household role.

Men are more likely to be hurt or killed on the job. They are more likely to lose custodial and property battles, and they are given longer prison sentences for the same crimes.

However, most of these situations developed from traditional male gender roles: the authoritative, self-sacrificing breadwinner who does not show emotional vulnerability

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or physical weakness. These stereotypes are the by-product of misogyny and they hurt women just as much as, or even more than, men. Although societal expectations have historically disadvantaged women, men do face some of the consequences.

Even though feminism has made considerable progress over the last hundred years, society is not yet capable of dismantling the several millennia worth of patriarchal subjugation, let alone reversing it entirely. The idea that "misandry" is an oppressive force on the same level as (or even worse than) misogyny has no merit.

Most importantly, feminism is not focused on blaming men for women's problems. The feminist movement rightly points out that most violence against women is committed by men, but does not view this as inherent in male nature. It is instead perceived as a result of the patriarchal society that oppresses everyone—an issue of socialization, not hatred.

MRAs nonetheless focus their ideology on anti-feminism first and men's issues second. Their insistence on playing the victim undermines the validity of their

concerns. By depicting women as societally privileged and at the root of men's hardships, MRAs create a false narrative of oppression that does little to help the vulnerable men their movement was designed to support.

Despite having an activist label, MRAs do not promote any meaningful change. They are not raising money to open shelters for male victims of domestic abuse or lobbying for safer workplaces. Instead, their activism exists in the limited sphere of the internet—parroting the same talking points against feminist arguments to prove that men are the more oppressed gender.

Some MRAs take on a more active role, but usually as a reaction against feminist campaigns. They attend events to intimidate speakers, send threatening messages to vocal feminist leaders, and use smear campaigns and in some cases rape threats to suppress and discredit the feminist movement.

Why is an activist movement with little genuine activism gaining political legitimacy?

MRA ideology represents the kind of misogyny that Donald Trump's presidency has helped bring to the forefront. Trump's sexualized remarks about women and comments that "women get it better than men" already make

him a sympathetic figure to the MRAs, whose beliefs rely on a narrative of victimhood.

Although Trump has no direct link to the men's rights movement, it is difficult to ignore the underlying impression that the history of his behavior toward women allows MRAs to feel empowered to become more vocal and aggressive in their views. The current political climate, too, enables them to be more controversial in manner and attitude than ever before. For those reasons, they should be considered a threat to women's safety and well-being.

Given the MRAs' lack of concrete action and ineffective, untenable ideology, it may be tempting to view them as harmless. Their attempt to reverse power dynamics and their misconstrual of the source of gender-based discrimination, although alarming, seem unthreatening in the bigger picture. The internet can feel detached from the world of politics, particularly when the MRAs are in small, isolated online spaces. Still, it may be ill-advised to overlook this community: If today's politics are evidence of anything, it is that those who feel ignored are beginning to wield the most power.

Recontextualizing Our Nation's History

By ALLISON ZUCKERMAN
STAFF WRITER

On an early morning this July in Demopolis, Alabama, a black police officer who fell asleep on patrol crashed his car into the town's Confederate monument and toppled it over. It was purely accidental, but the damage was irreparable. Demopolis had to make a decision about the fate of the stone Confederate soldier, now broken at the shins. After deliberations among the mayor and a special committee, the town council voted to replace the statue with an obelisk honoring all fallen soldiers. They gave the Confederate statue a new home in the Marengo County History and Archives Museum.

Although older citizens of Demopolis did argue over the statue's value in the town, there were no mass protests. Angry, tiki torch-wielding protesters did not invade the town, as they did in Charlottesville, Virginia. Instead, Demopolis recontextualized its history. Its actions should serve as the model for the continuing debates over the fate of America's numerous Confederate monuments.

The dialogue concerning America's values is important and necessary. As a people, Americans have the right to decide what values are memorialized through their public monuments. They have the right to remove a president from the twenty-dollar bill, a man who ignored a Supreme Court order and caused the deaths of thousands of Native Americans,

if they believe his memory is incongruent with contemporary American values. In doing such things, however, Americans cannot and should not erase American history -- even the offensive, violent, and oppressive parts.

By placing some of the Confederate monuments in museums, Americans are meaningfully re-examining and reinterpreting their history. Statues do not exist in a vacuum. While a Confederate statue memorializes Confederate soldiers and the antebellum South, it also memorializes the time in which it was erected. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, most Confederate monuments were erected in the early 1900s and in the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, they are symbols of not just the former Confederacy, but also the Jim Crow South and the battle against civil rights.

If Americans simply tear down statues they deem offensive, they lose a valuable way at looking at the past; we lose an opportunity to explore and unpack our nation's racial history. Joseph McGill, a black preservationist and plantation museum docent, said during a presentation at the Marengo County museum,

Americans have the right to decide what values are memorialized through their public monuments.

shortly after the toppling of Demopolis's statue: "Leave [the statues] right there. But if you leave them, you're going to have to reinterpret them."

America has a lot of history to reinterpret. Reinterpretation, however, is not erasing. Princeton University should not rename the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs because President Wilson was racist. Our American history, though, must acknowledge that he was racist, that he led significant segregation in the federal government, and that he threw civil rights leader William Monroe Trotter out of the Oval Office in 1914 when Trotter petitioned against Jim Crow laws.

Instead of removing historical legacies from universities or public spaces, America must add to its national memory. It should memorialize other figures, like Trotter, as symbols of contemporary American values. Should cities and towns remove statues of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson because they were slave owners? That is a conversation worth having, but the conversation's significance lies not in the fate of the statues but in acknowledgement that our Founding Fathers *did* own slaves, that they did uphold some oppressive institutions while demanding freedom from the British.

If a statue offends Americans, then we must discuss why. We cannot ignore an offensive past. We must confront it. By relegating our Confederate monuments to museums, we are not ignoring them or accepting them as fixed symbols of hate. We are instead placing them in a historical context where we can better interrogate them and the people who erected them.

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