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Trump: US will act unilaterally on North Korea if necessary

Washington (CNN)US President Donald Trump has declared he would be willing to go it alone to restrain North Korea's nuclear weapons program should China fail to change the situation, saying if Beijing won't help solve it, then "we will" alone.

"China will either decide to help us with North Korea or they won't," Trump said in an interview published Sunday in the Financial Times. "If they do, that will be very good for China, and if they don't, it won't be good for anyone."

Trump's administration has repeatedly emphasized its high concern over the North Korean nuclear threat. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited China last month to press North Korea's neighbor for help in mitigating that threat, and Trump is scheduled to host Chinese President Xi Jinping this week in the US, where he intends to bring the issue up.

China didn't respond to Trump's comments to the FT Monday, but issued a statement saying that Tillerson had phoned the country's top diplomat, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, about Xi's visit.

According to the statement, Yang said the meeting was of "utmost importance in China-US relations" and was important for "promoting peace, stability and prosperity... for the whole world."

On the campaign trail and since taking office, Trump has argued China is responsible for the continued nuclear proliferation in North Korea. He said in his Financial Times interview that he planned to talk with Xi about that situation and use trade as "the incentive" to talk China into fixing it.

Trump has repeatedly said he would take aggressive action against China to reduce the US trade deficit with the country. But if the talks with Xi don't produce Trump's desired result of getting Beijing to solve the North Korean nuclear problem, Trump said the US would take action.



China and Korea: A complicated relationship

"If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will," Trump told the Financial Times.

Asked to clarify if he believed the US could solve the problem without China, Trump said:

"totally."

In an interview with ABC News Sunday, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said the US should "no longer take the excuses from China that 'they're concerned.'"

"They need to show us how concerned they are... the only country that can stop North Korea is China, and they know that," she said.

The US maintains that China hasn't done enough to apply financial pressure given that Beijing is North Korea's only real ally and accounts for 70% of the country's trade.

China has repeatedly said that its influence over the North Korea has been overstated, and the US and South Korea should stop antagonizing North Korea with its annual military drills.



On board the USS Carl Vinson off South Korea

"On one hand, North Korea has violated UN Security Council resolutions banning its ballistic missile launches; on the other hand, South Korea, the US -- and now Japan -- insist on conducting super-large-scale military drills. It's a vicious cycle that could spiral out of control -- and such a scenario would benefit no one," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said during a press briefing on March 14.

Beijing has proposed a "double halt" approach that would see North Korea suspend its nuclear program, while the US and South Korea would call off joint military drills.



North Korea's missile

The US has already dismissed the plan. In a briefing on March 9, Mark Toner, the acting State Department spokesman, said: "There's no equivalence between North Korea's illegal missile and nuclear activities and what is our lawful, longstanding joint security exercises with our allies in the region."

North Korean state media has slammed the drills, accusing the countries in a report dated March 12 of "becoming more reckless as the days go by."

On Monday, the US, South Korea and Japan announced a new round of exercises from April 3-5. South Korean Defense Ministry Spokesman Moon Sang-gyun said drills were planned "to show a strong resolve to counter North Korea's nuclear and missile threats as North Korea has been steadily improving its submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) capabilities."

North Korea has test-fired a number of missiles this year and in recent weeks has tested engines which analysts said could be used to power long-range weapons.

Last September, Pyongyang claimed to have tested a nuclear warhead, with South Korea's weather service estimating the explosion to have about 10 kilotons of power, or about two-thirds the power of the bomb the US dropped on Hiroshima in World War II.

Speaking in South Korea last month, Tillerson warned that the US would leave the option of military action on the table with regard to North Korea.

Lithuania fears Russian propaganda is prelude to eventual invasion



US army forces during military exercises in Lithuania in November 2016.

Russia is trying to create a false history that denies the Baltic states' right to exist, with alarming parallels to its justifications for the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, top Lithuanian officials have said.

The country's defence minister and officials from the army's department of strategic communication have told the Guardian that they are taking very seriously the threat of disinformation campaigns orchestrated by Moscow that aim to destabilise the region.

"Russia is a threat," the defence minister, Raimundas Karoblis, said. "They are saying our capital Vilnius should not belong to Lithuania because between the first and second world wars it was occupied by Poland. It's history of course, but Russia is using this pretext.

“Sometimes [the disinformation] is through [the government-run news agency] Sputnik, sometimes through their TV, but usually from politicians in the Duma.

Copies of manual, with tips on civil disobedience, given to schools and libraries after Trump victory threatens Nato alliance

“There are now reports that Klaipėda [Lithuania’s third largest city] never belonged to Lithuania; that it was the gift of Stalin after the second world war. There are real parallels with Crimea’s annexation [from Ukraine] ... We are speaking of a danger to the territorial integrity of Lithuania.”

Sgt Tomas Ceponis, from the Lithuanian military’s department of strategic communication, said his team was monitoring disinformation, much of which bears similarities to the propaganda campaigns reported by Ukrainian specialists.

Lithuania fears the campaign to rewrite history could be an effort to prepare the ground for a possible attack with conventional weapons – what the military calls “kinetic operations”.

“Some of my colleagues from Ukraine told me there was a 12-year period of latent information operations, non-kinetic,” Ceponis said. “Then after, when conditions were set, they turned to kinetic operation.

“What is really a threat for us, is that we see they are working on a similar narrative for Lithuania, and they have been working on it for many years.”

The issue of how national history is interpreted is potentially a question of national survival for Lithuania, whose status has shifted over several centuries from a major regional power to a territory of another nation, to an independent but small and vulnerable state.

Ceponis said the Russians spent a lot of time and energy putting together a narrative in Crimea

that incorporated a revival of the Tsarist-era term “Novorossia” or “New Russia”, to describe parts of eastern Ukraine. The term was embraced by Putin when he asserted Moscow’s right to use force there in 2014, but had first appeared nearly a decade earlier.

“In 2003, when they first talked about Novorossia, no one even cared about these comments, but now we can trace history back and see these articles,” Ceponis said.

The Lithuanian military says similar campaigns have been traced on TV and social media that question the existence of a separate Lithuanian state, lay claim to part of its territory, or bolster the idea that the country is oppressing ethnic Russians.

The former deputy chairman of the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, Vladimir Zhirinovsky is among those who have challenged Lithuania’s right to exist.

“According to him the eastern part of Lithuania where our capital is should be connected to Belorussia, and the western part should be connected to Russia,” Ceponis said.

Resist foreign occupation and attempt cyber-attacks against enemy, advises document produced by defence ministry

His team has picked up on the creation of Facebook pages for imaginary “statelets” inside the Baltic area, reminiscent of the self-declared People’s Republic of Donbass and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine.

Some of the accounts may seem crude or absurd but if they are well presented, they can be very persuasive, Ceponis said. “You don’t need to lie 100%, just have to provide selective information, and they are really good at playing the game. Not everyone is a historian, a politician and for general citizens it can be hard to understand.

“We live in a democracy, which is why each of our citizens became a target for hostile propaganda,” he added.

Vilnius has long been nervous about a neighbour whose control it escaped only a quarter of a century ago. The authorities have already taken four television stations to court for their content, and had them temporarily suspended. Another key tactic is trying to educate citizens to identify propaganda for themselves, and exposing overt misinformation campaigns.

On the ground, Germany is to lead a battle group of 1,000 troops, including soldiers from the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway and Luxembourg, who will be stationed in Lithuania, amid growing concerns over Putin’s intentions in the Baltics. Nato battle groups led by America, Canada and Britain are also being stationed in Poland, Latvia and Estonia.

Karoblis said the situation was “terrifying” but that the troops were vital to send the message that Lithuania and others were “not alone”. He said: “If the worst-case scenario [were to happen] we will probably not get another chance if we surrender without a fight.”

He added: “In Kaliningrad [a Russian enclave bordering Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea] they are building their capacities. It seems that they will have now a permanent middle-range missile system there that is capable of bringing nuclear weapons. It will cover the eastern part of Germany, or the south of Sweden, for example.

Ceponis said the west needed to step up its battle against Russian propaganda. “You have a saying ‘the road to hell is paved with good intentions’. If we lose the information war today, tomorrow we may be fighting with weapons.”

Imam who made offensive remarks about Jews and Christians will be asked to leave Singapore



Imam Nalla Mohamed Abdul Jameel was charged at the State Courts on April 3, 2017, for insulting Christians and Jews during his Friday sermons at a mosque.

SINGAPORE - The Islamic religious leader who was fined \$4,000 for making offensive remarks against Christians and Jews will be asked to leave Singapore.

On Monday (April 3), Imam Nalla Mohamed Abdul Jameel pleaded guilty to promoting enmity between different groups on the grounds of religion, and committing an act prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony.

“Nalla has paid the fine. He will be repatriated,” said the Ministry of Home Affairs in a statement on Monday.

The imam, who is from India, has been working in Singapore since 2010 on a work permit.

“The action against Nalla has been taken with some regret,” the MHA said. “Nalla has worked diligently as Chief Imam at the Jamae Chulia Mosque over the past seven years, attending to the needs of his congregation, and reaching out to other faiths. He has not been deliberately malicious.”

In February, a video of the imam reciting a prayer in Arabic that said “God help us against Jews and Christians”, among other things, was circulated online.

Last Friday, the imam apologised for his remarks. He clarified that the additional supplication he read was not from the Quran, but an old Arabic text originating from his village in India.

He made the apology to a group of leaders of various religious groups, including those from the Christian faith, at a closed-door meeting on Friday. He also visited the Maghain Aboth Synagogue at Waterloo Street on Sunday to apologise personally to Rabbi Mordechai Abergel and the Jewish community.

Meanwhile, the police have issued stern warnings to two Muslim Singaporeans connected to the video of the imam who made offensive remarks against Jews and Christians.

One of them had uploaded it on Facebook, the other had supported the imam’s messages.

Both have issued public apologies through the MHA.

Mr Terrence Kenneth John Nunis, 40, as warned for posting the video online instead of reporting it to the police.

The Attorney General’s Chambers has “assessed that his actions were also in breach of the law”, said the MHA in a statement.

The investment associate wrote in his apology: “I accept that what I did was wrong. Instead, I should have only reported the incident to the Police. My action was racially and religiously divisive. I unreservedly apologise to all Singaporeans for my conduct. I deeply regret my actions, and undertake not to repeat my conduct. I also accept that I made the situation worse by making some intemperate remarks.”

Dr Syed Muhammad Khairudin Aljunied was warned for two Facebook posts he made on March 1 and 2.

The posts by the 40-year-old associate professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS) were a fictional conversation between an imam and a “silly convert”.

Dr Khairudin said that fictional account was not meant to support of anyone in particular.

“I also wish to say that my posts could be seen as being supportive of the Imam, and I was wrong to have put them up,” he wrote. “I now wish to apologise unreservedly to Singaporeans and NUS, since my posts were supportive of what the Imam had said. I undertake not to repeat my conduct.”

The NUS, which suspended Dr Khairudin when the police were investigation, said on Monday night that it has also warned Dr Khairudin for breaching the university’s code of conduct for staff and the suspension will be lifted.

Science, technology and innovation: A new narrative is needed



In many cases, technical advances inspire a quest for scientific understanding (it works, but why?).

The idea that science is inextricably linked to technological progress is now taken for granted.

Historical evidence is voluminous and examples abound all around us, from satellites that keep our GPS devices working to medical treatments that cure diseases that have victimized millions in the past. This idea has unfortunately been drastically simplified to fit a global narrative of innovation that has shaped science policy in Canada and internationally.

Science and technology have co-evolved throughout history. After the Second World War, an interpretation of this relationship became popular in the United States, and was feverishly embraced elsewhere: From advances in science, we are able to create better technologies.

This so-called "linear model" has been widely discredited. For one, science does not always drive technology. In many cases, technical advances inspire a quest for scientific understanding (it works, but why?). Ask your doctor: She will readily give you examples of drugs and therapies that work, even if the underlying mechanisms remain obscure.

Nonetheless, as physicists in particular like to point out, greater understanding of phenomena such as magnetism or nuclear fusion has allowed new classes of technology to emerge. Techniques such as gene splicing, which allows the manipulation of DNA, have been made possible by fundamental advances in biology. There is certainly a case to be made for scientific theory allowing the development of new technologies in many instances.

The linear model was a convenient political argument to keep fundamental science carried out in universities separate from applied research and development taking place in industry.

The realization that it does not describe the complex relationship between science and technology has given rise to another interpretation, which views both as part of a broader interactive "system."

In the current paradigm for supporting scientific research, the key goal is promoting innovation, which in turn is hoped to lead to economic growth.

Because governments are convinced that innovation is a good thing, they prioritize investments on activities that (presumably) lead to innovation. What used to be called "science policy" has been subsumed under innovation agendas. Research councils have worked tirelessly to assure politicians that their budgets are good investments in the innovation system. Universities have understood that as well and have created large infrastructures to support technology transfer and entrepreneurship.

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So what is wrong with funding science and expecting innovation in return?

Shouldn't governments and universities be working to promote prosperity?

The problem is the combination of a narrow interpretation of innovation with a simplistic understanding of the relationship between science and technology. The former is focused on products in "high-tech" fields such as information and communication technologies, advanced manufacturing and nanotechnology. The latter frames science as an input into short-term technology development. Mix these two misconceptions together and you have got the prescription for much contemporary policy: fund academic research projects on promising areas of technology, requiring the participation of industry partners, and you will get commercially valuable innovations as a result.

Needless to say, this is not how things work in the overwhelming majority of cases. But research-funding agencies have been compelled to create commercialization programs that aim at exactly that, to show politicians they are delivering innovation. The question is, are these the best institutions to support innovation? Research councils typically know how to fund academic science, which involves managing processes to allocate funds based on scientific merit. Supporting technology development, let alone the commercialization of inventions, is an entirely different ball game. It requires knowledge and expertise of industries, markets and business activities that they simply do not have.

Innovation is not only about technology in the everyday use of the word (high-tech devices), but about improvements firms make in producing, distributing and marketing their goods and services. It is about finding a more efficient or otherwise lucrative way to deliver a superior product or service. Redirecting the entire scientific research system toward innovation misses the point. Most of the action in innovation is well beyond technology, let alone research.

Canada has conformed to this narrow interpretation of the role of science in innovation for decades. The reviews of support for fundamental research and of the innovation agenda, initiated last year, were opportunities to confront the goals and architecture of government investments in these areas. They may still bring good news, although the delay in the release of the former has been at a minimum disconcerting, and the consultations around innovation seem to reiterate many of the assumptions discussed above.

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We need a fresh discourse around the role and value of science in Canada, recognizing the multiple contributions research makes to knowledge creation, education, and technical advance. This discourse should recognize that government agencies do not have the foresight to predict, let alone engineer, commercial technology breakthroughs. It should also comprehend an acknowledgment of science as a fundamentally long-range activity, whose power accrues from cumulative knowledge and incremental advances in the understanding of natural and social phenomena.

What Was Lenin Thinking?



Mural of Vladimir Lenin.

LONDON — What was Vladimir Lenin thinking on the long journey to Petrograd's Finland Station in 1917?

Like everyone else, he had been taken by surprise at the speed with which the February Revolution had succeeded. As he traveled from Zurich across Europe to Russia, on board a sealed train courtesy of Germany's kaiser, he must have reflected that this was an opportunity not to be missed.

That the weak liberal parties dominated the new government was to be expected. What worried him were the reports he was receiving that his own Bolsheviks were vacillating over the way forward. Theory had bound them, together with most of the left, to the Marxist orthodoxy that, at this stage, the revolution in Russia could be only bourgeois-democratic. Socialism was possible only in advanced economies like Germany, France or even the United States, but not in peasant Russia. (Leon Trotsky and his band of intellectuals were among the few dissenters from that view.)

Since the course of the revolution was thus preordained, all that socialists could do was offer support to the provisional government as it carried through the revolution's first phase and developed a full-fledged capitalist society. Once this was completed, then they could agitate for a more radical revolution.

This combination of dogmatism and passivity infuriated Lenin. The February upheaval had forced him to rethink old dogmas. To move forward, he now believed, there had to be a socialist revolution. No other solution was possible. The czarist state had to be destroyed, root and branch. So he said as he stepped off the train in Petrograd: No compromise was possible with a government that continued to prosecute the war or with the parties that supported such a government.

The Bolshevik slogan that embodied his tactical thinking was "peace, land and bread." As for the revolution, he now argued that the international capitalist chain would break at its weakest link. Winning over the Russian workers and peasants to create a new socialist state would pave the way for an insurrection in Germany and elsewhere. Without this, he argued, it would be difficult to build any meaningful form of socialism in Russia.

He detailed this new approach in his "April Theses," but had to fight hard to persuade the Bolshevik party. Denounced by some for turning his back on accepted Marxist doctrine, Lenin would quote Mephistopheles from Goethe's "Faust": "Theory, my friend, is gray, but green is the eternal tree of life." An early supporter was the feminist Alexandra Kollontai. She, too, rejected compromise because, she believed, none was possible.

From February to October, arguably the most open period in Russian history, Lenin won over his party, joined forces with Trotsky and prepared for a new revolution. The provisional government of Alexander Kerensky refused to withdraw from the war. Bolshevik agitators among the troops at the front assailed his vacillations. Large-scale mutinies and desertions followed.

Within the workers' and soldiers' councils, or soviets, Lenin's strategy began to make sense to large numbers of workers. The Bolsheviks won majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets,

and the party was developing rapidly elsewhere. This merger between Lenin's political ideas and a growing class consciousness among workers produced the formula for October.

Far from being a conspiracy, let alone a coup, the October Revolution was perhaps the most publicly planned uprising in history. Two of Lenin's oldest comrades on the party's central committee remained opposed to an immediate revolution and published the date of the event. While its final details were obviously not advertised beforehand, the takeover was swift and involved minimal violence.

That all changed with the ensuing civil war, in which the nascent Soviet state's enemies were backed by the czar's former Western allies. Amid the resulting chaos and millions of casualties, the Bolsheviks finally prevailed — but at a terrible political and moral cost, including the virtual extinction of the working class that had originally made the revolution.

The choice that followed the revolution of October 1917 was thus not between Lenin and liberal democracy. The real choice was to be determined instead by a brutal struggle for power between the Red and White armies, the latter led by czarist generals who made no secret that if they won, both Bolsheviks and Jews would be exterminated. Pogroms carried out by the Whites saw entire Jewish villages wiped out. A majority of Russian Jews fought back, either as members of the Red Army or in their own partisan units. Nor should we forget that a few decades later, it was the Red Army — originally forged in the civil war by Trotsky, Mikhail Tukhachevsky and Mikhail Frunze (the former two killed later by Stalin) — that broke the military might of the Third Reich in the epic battles of Kursk and Stalingrad. By then, Lenin had been dead for almost two decades.

Weakened by a stroke for the last two years before he died in 1924, Lenin had time to reflect on the achievements of the October Revolution. He was not happy. He saw how the czarist state and its practices, far from being destroyed, had infected Bolshevism. Great-Russian chauvinism was rampant and had to be rooted out, he realized. The level of party culture was lamentable after the human losses of the civil war.

"Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched," he wrote in Pravda. "The most harmful thing would be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something."

“No,” he concluded, “we are ridiculously deficient.” The Revolution had to admit its mistakes and renew itself, he believed; otherwise, it would fail. Yet this lesson went unheeded after his death. His writings were largely ignored or deliberately distorted. No subsequent Soviet leader emerged with Lenin’s vision.

“His mind was a remarkable instrument,” wrote Winston Churchill, no admirer of Bolshevism. “When its light shone it revealed the whole world, its history, its sorrows, its stupidities, its shams, and above all, its wrongs.”

Of his successors, neither of the notable reformers — Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s and ’60s and Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s — had the capacity to transform the country. The implosion of the Soviet Union owed almost as much to its degraded political culture — and, at times, the ridiculous deficiency of the bureaucratic elite — as it did to the economic stagnation and resource dependency that set in from the 1970s. Obsessed with mimicking the technological advances of the United States, its leaders cut the ground out from beneath their feet. In the revolution’s final, sorry chapter, not a few of its bureaucrats rediscovered themselves as millionaires and oligarchs — something Trotsky had predicted from exile in 1936.

“Politics is a concentrated expression of economics,” Lenin once remarked. As capitalism stumbles, its politicians and their oligarchical backers are finding voters deserting their parties in droves. The shift to the right in Western politics is a revolt against the neoliberal coalitions that have governed since the Soviet Union collapsed. Today, however, the politicians cannot blame socialism as they once did — for it does not exist.

In the national-conservative Russia of its president, Vladimir V. Putin, there are no celebrations this year of either the February Revolution or the October one. “They are not on our calendar,” he told an Indian journalist of my acquaintance last year.

“After their death,” Lenin wrote of revolutionaries, “attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to hallow their *names* to a certain extent for the ‘consolation’ of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter.” After his death, against the cries of his widow and sisters, Lenin was mummified, put on public display and treated like a Byzantine saint. He had predicted his own fate.



Under the Macroscopic is a weekly summary of what's happening around the world and what's worth pondering. Stay on top of international and local news with this bulletin produced by the Raffles Economics and Current Affairs Society.

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