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## CHINA AND NORTH KOREA BATTLE IT OUT IN THE PRESS

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North Korea's state media outlet shared harsh words on Wednesday after a major Chinese newspaper called their nation's nuclear program into question. The feud began Sunday when Peoples Daily, the official newspaper of China's Communist Party, released an editorial saying that nuclear and missile ambitions have put [North Korea] and the whole region into dire peril. The newspaper added that North Korea must not be obsessed in a wrong path of repeated nuclear tests and missile launches that resulted in rounds of sanctions.

While noting North Korea's reasonable concerns over national security, the Chinese newspaper urged its ally nation to discontinue any future nuclear tests or missile launches and abide by U.N. Security Council mandates. It also echoed earlier statements made by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who clarified at Friday's Security Council meeting that China, though allied with North Korea, was not solely responsible for disbanding their nuclear program. Under the Trump administration, the U.S. has leaned on China as a means of dissuading North Korea from further developing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

On Wednesday, North Korea's official media outlet, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), made it clear the nation would not be told what to do [ ] by its ally. China should no longer recklessly try to test the limitations of our patience, the outlet said. KCNA also pointed to China's diplomacy with the U.S. as a sign of betrayal and a means of impeding North Korea's strategic interests.

Above all, KCNA defended the merits of North Korea's nuclear program. The outlet accused China of exaggerating the damage created by North Korean nuclear tests in three northeastern Chinese provinces. KCNA even referred to China's requests to dismantle its nation's nuclear program as an undisguised threat to an honest-minded neighboring country. China's willingness to consider military action in the future was "based on big-power chauvinism, KCNA said.

Over the years, nuclear weapons have become a source of pride in North Korea, with missiles often prominently featured on television and in the nation's newspapers. The Los Angeles Times's Jonathan Kaiman described this pervasive national sentiment earlier this month: In North Korea, missiles and nuclear bombs are more than a means of national defense [ ] are, for broad segments of the public, objects of near-religious devotion.

This devotion was made clear in Wednesday's response by KCNA. For us, nuclear is an absolute symbol of dignity and power, and it is the highest interest, KCNA said. Not only is North Korea's nuclear program imperative to the nation's existence and development, said the outlet, it also "can never be changed nor shaken."

While tensions between North Korea and China have been simmering for weeks, China has remained hopeful that increased dialogue will prevent the need for military action. On Wednesday, China urged both nations to stop irritating each other and to remain calm and exercise restraint. This request comes amid growing concern that North Korea will disregard Security Council regulations and launch its sixth, and arguably most powerful, nuclear test.

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Kaynak/Source: