

Enemy status: North Korea's updated geopolitical code

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Joint security area between North and South Korea

Hailey Brown — In a speech to the Supreme People's Assembly, North Korea's "rubber stamp" parliament, [President Kim Jong Un](#) stated that South Korea was an enemy foreign country, and "the most hostile state." In the past, policy toward South Korea was back and forth, toggling between discussions of reunification and nuclear threats. The classification of South Korea as an enemy is a key element of North Korea's [geopolitical code](#).

[Geopolitical codes](#) are multifaceted, containing prescriptions for allies and enemies, maintaining relations, defense, and how to present all those decisions to a country's people and the world. In combination, these decisions define how a country interacts in the world. For North Korea, its geopolitical code has been centered upon its relations with South Korea. The possibility of reunification has been discussed since the end of the Korean War in 1953. The war ended in a truce, leaving the two Koreas in a continued state of war. North Korea's new declaration of unfriendly relations does not outright mean the state will engage in war with the South. It may be more to do with internal politics. The policy started with a shuffling of government agencies and propaganda, as the state brought an end to positive radio broadcasts and monuments dedicated to the cause of reunification. In addition, North Korea has also continued to bolster its [material power](#), likely in attempts to back up its diplomatic standings.

Kim Jong Un has continued to grow North Korea's nuclear weapons capabilities, [conducting drills and tests](#) on new weapons and defense technologies. A strong military arsenal is a material power asset that can shift North Korea's power position in relation to South Korea, the broader region, and even world powers like the United States. Boosting capabilities ties directly into North Korea's geopolitical code, as a strong military can act as security against attacks from the South or other countries. Whether the drills are merely posturing or a signal of a changing tide, however, is unclear.

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