

→ Mark your confusion.

→ Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)

→ Write a 250+ word response to the article.

(If you are a teacher or student who would like to modify this Google Doc, go to File > Make a Copy. I cannot and do not respond to Share requests -- my apologies!)

What it would be like if North Korea were in America

By Maxwell Anderson for *The Weekend Reader*, 7-13-17

It's hard to know what to do with North Korea. I believe part of the reason Americans are confused is that we have a hard time imagining the motives of Kim Jong-un. The Korean War is the forgotten war and our general familiarity with Korean history is thin. I wonder if it would help to imagine the dynamics of what's going on there and applying it them to something with which we are more familiar: our own history.

The book and TV series, *The Man in the High Castle*, imagine what the world would look like today if the Axis powers had won World War II. The conceit makes for good storytelling and some interesting speculation on how life would be radically different had the Nazis and Japan won. In that spirit, let's imagine the Korean problem as if it were happening in Bizarro America.

Admittedly this is offbeat but imagine with me that in this scenario, the U.S. is in the role of Korea (with the Union as South Korea and the Confederacy as North Korea). Mexico is China. Great Britain is the U.S. And Cuba is Japan. In order for the comparison to work, we'll have to take some historical liberties to make the situations more comparable.

1. Imagine the Civil War was not won by the Union. [The Union was about to win, with help from British troops, but then Mexico sent hundreds of thousands of troops over the border to swing the war.](#) It ended in a bitter stalemate with no victor. Ever since, what was the United States has remained fractured into two countries: the Union and the Confederacy. The Confederacy isolated itself and rarely interacts directly with the Union or any other country. It's called "[the Hermit Confederacy.](#)" As a result, it's economy has been stagnant and millions are in poverty and are hungry. Meanwhile, the Union is one of the world's great stories of wealth creation and economic development. It's been called a miracle and the Union now has [per capita income twenty times higher than it's neighbor.](#)

2 Imagine Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, remained in office after the war and revealed himself to be a megalomaniacal dictator who [created an entire mythology around his life](#) to be seen as the "chosen son" of the South. After his death, his son took over the supreme rule of the Confederacy and ever since the country has been ruled by something of a hereditary monarchy in the Davis Family organized around a national principle of self-reliance.

3. Imagine Davis and his dictatorial progeny have seemed crazy to the outside world, but they have [remained invulnerable domestically.](#) Each dictator has died in peace rather than by violence. They have maintained control through a mixture of assassinating their enemies and stirring nationalist sentiment with the people. When any citizen poses the slightest threat to the absolute rule of the Confederate dictator, that person and their family are either executed or sold into slavery. Meanwhile, those who swear perfect allegiance to the Confederacy and the dictator get to control all the plantations and positions of power in the government and military. Moreover, the Confederacy has not been threatened externally because said dictator has poured an inordinate amount of the Confederacy's capital into building [one of the world's largest armies](#), stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and developing credible nuclear weapons technology.



A North Korean submarine-launched ballistic missile

4. Imagine the Confederacy has funded its weapons program through a combination of [trading with Mexico](#), [sending forced labor overseas](#), [illicit drug trafficking](#), [illegal arms deals](#), and [cybertheft](#).
5. Imagine Great Britain had remained the world's sole superpower, built on the back of an incredible navy and its far-flung colonies. Although Britain has not fared well in land wars in the Americas (Let's suppose they lost 40,000 soldiers while supporting the Union in the American Civil War), the Union remains one of Britain's strongest allies. [Britain has 20,000 troops stationed in the Union to protect the Union from invasion and to exert influence in the hemisphere more broadly.](#)
6. In this world, [the Confederacy has two stated goals](#): one is reunification with the North, and the other is for Great Britain to totally disengage from the Union and send their troops home. Great Britain doesn't trust the Confederacy or its dictator and has watched with concern as the Dictator developed nuclear weapons and tested missiles. [It has tried different avenues of dealing with the Confederacy](#), offering them carrots (trading oil for an agreement to shut down nuclear power), sticks (declaring that not only complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament, but also a reduction of the Confederacy's conventional weapons, were preconditions for negotiations) and essentially trying to wait out the Confederate regime. Nothing has worked.
7. One of the biggest reasons sanctions haven't worked is because [the Confederacy's biggest trading partner is Mexico](#), an emerging superpower that has nuclear weapons of its own and is the dominant player in the region. Mexico does 75% of all trading with the Confederacy. While Mexico doesn't like the Confederacy's dictator, the Mexicans have been realists when it comes to foreign policy. They don't want to push sanctions too far because they fear a collapse of the Confederacy and a stream of refugees pouring over the border, upsetting their own delicate social equilibrium. Besides, they would prefer that Great Britain didn't have troops stationed on their doorstep anyway.
8. Because of their allegiance to the Union, their moral disgust with slavery and [Confederate prison camps three times the size of D.C.](#), and their own fears about the growing military power of the Confederacy, the British have considered launching strikes against the Confederacy to depose the Davises. Until recently the Confederates didn't have the technology to fire back directly at the British. But the British haven't attempted any attacks other than some [cyber warfare work to disrupt the Confederate's nuclear program](#).



Military parade in Pyongyang

9. Imagine the situation is even more complicated because the Union just elected a president who was born in the Confederacy. [His official position is to open dialogue with the Confederacy](#) and seek peace. A growing number of citizens of the Union agree. Many have family in the Confederacy they want to reunite with and look upon their former countrymen with love and pity. Despite being regularly threatened by Davis-un, they are beginning to wonder how valuable their alliance with the British is anyway. [Just last month, the Union halted implementation of a high-tech missile defense system from Great Britain](#) because it was causing so much strain to relations with the Confederacy and Mexico.

10. For Great Britain, the options appear limited and unattractive. There are four main alternatives:

- Refuse to negotiate with the dictator of the Confederacy to pressure him to step down, and to stop developing missiles and give up his Nuclear capabilities. This has been the strategy for some time but nothing has come of it. It's hard to imagine why anything would change unless the dictator was deposed by internal forces.
- Try to strengthen your hand through applying economic sanctions on the Confederacy and anyone that does business with the Confederacy. This has been foiled by Mexico's reticence to cripple the Confederacy completely. Also, the dictator is comfortable enough with letting his own people starve that eventually the Union and other members of the international community get uncomfortable and send relief aid.
- Attack the Confederacy to kill the dictator and destroy the country's military capabilities. Experts say you could win that war in a matter of months and knock out much of the Confederacy's capabilities in a week. But there's a big problem: in this scenario, 80% of the population of the Union lives in Washington D.C. which is just over the border from the Confederates. Over the past few decades, the Confederates have amassed 8,000 pieces of artillery hidden along the border, at least 1,000 of which have the range to hit D.C. [If the Confederacy were attacked, it is estimated they would counter by raining artillery fire on D.C., killing as many as 300,000 people.](#) D.C. has a big subway system and enough bunkers to accommodate the whole population, but the citizens are notoriously bad about training for this scenario and it is estimated many would not make it to the bunkers in time. Matters

could be worse if the Confederacy launched a nuclear-tipped missile at Havana or used biological and chemical weapons on D.C.

- Leave North America and let North and South re-unify. If they unified under the Union, Mexico would be unhappy to have Great Britain at its door and loss of influence in the region. If they unified under the Confederacy, (which is the only scenario the Confederacy would accept), the Union would suffer economically, millions of people would be subject to the repression of Davis-un, and it would give the upper hand to Mexico for further dominance in the area. It also leaves in power with nuclear weapons someone you consider to be a maniac.

11. Imagine Great Britain is now led by an unpredictable leader with a big temper and no foreign policy experience who spends an inordinate amount of time tweeting [insults at the BBC](#). Many in Britain are [wondering if he has the right temperament for a high-stakes dilemma](#) like the one posed by the Davis-un and the Confederacy.

12. This past week, the Confederacy launched an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile 1,740 miles in the air, leading experts to believe it now has the range to hit some of the outposts of British territory. The Confederates claim the missile can hit “anywhere in the world,” but that hasn’t been demonstrated. But this is a problem because although Great Britain has [spent billions on missile defense](#) trying to build tech capable of “hitting a bullet with a bullet.” But the system probably could not stop a missile from the Confederacy. [The experts say that the Confederates still lack the ability to put a nuclear weapon on a missile like that](#). All that to say that the window for British action hasn’t entirely closed, but it is closing. There may yet be a couple years before the Confederacy can credibly pose a nuclear missile threat to “anywhere in the world.” Once it can, all bets are off.

Response Options:

- In this article, Mr. Anderson puts forth a creative spin on the current North Korea crisis. Summarize Mr. Anderson’s “alternate universe” explanation of the present North Korea crisis, using helpful resources when you get stuck.
- Summarize the author’s argument, and then respond by either agreeing and adding on, disagreeing with reasons, or complicating with further questions. Below is a “They Say, I Say” template to help*:

The general argument made by author X in her/his work, _____, is that _____. More specifically, X argues that _____. She/he writes, “_____.” In this passage, X is suggesting that _____. In conclusion, X’s belief is that _____.

In my view, X is wrong/right, because _____. More specifically, I believe that _____. For example, _____. Although X might object that _____, I maintain that _____. Therefore, I conclude that _____.

*Courtesy of Cathy Birkenstein, co-author with Gerald Graff of *They Say, I Say*