



Militarising the Far East

by Simon Belt

North Korea is one of the three countries announced in George W Bush's *State of the Nation* speech in January 2002, whereby Iran and Iraq were listed alongside North Korea as forming an **axi**

s of evil

'. That North Korea was included in the *axis of evil*

and is yet the powers that be in Washington still haven't done anything much more than tweet about it is telling. Is North Korea really so powerful that it has resisted mighty power of the US that dismantled the Iraqi state with a little help from the UK?

Is there something going on in North Korea that has prompted this latest round of grandstanding tweets from the President of the US? Some recent missile launches from the secretive North

Korean state are worthy of news reports, but what of real significance is going on that warrants threats by the US to suspend trade with China for its trading relationship with North Korea?

Diplomacy over North Korea supposedly testing a nuclear warhead last week appears to be out of kilter with any possible solution to resolving the political crisis the US have created with this last axis of evil state. It does make you wonder if that's the intention all along, as the US are technically capable of dismantling the North Korean state if it needed to. Having no viable diplomatic option, because you have created no diplomatic option because of the rhetoric of the untouchable, unique badness of Kim Jong-un is self-fulfilling. The gulf between a puny isolated state in the Far East testing some missiles and the mighty US, the only super-power since the end of the Cold War nearly 30 years ago is stark.

Perhaps it is the very gulf in power relations, and the gaping lack of political vision or purpose of the US, represented so starkly by the Trump presidency that is the driver in this scenario. Perhaps there is little by way of strategic or regional interest for the US, yet inability to act purposefully that is the real driver in American foreign policy here. That would be cause for concern as the desire to assert moral purpose through destroying the North Korean state or any other is then given form through accidental happening or whim rather than anything that can be mediated through managing self-interest.

This is a foreign policy conundrum that needs unpicking with some urgency with calm heads who really do want a better world.