

NORTH KOREAN GENOCIDE, NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND FOOD ASSISTANCE

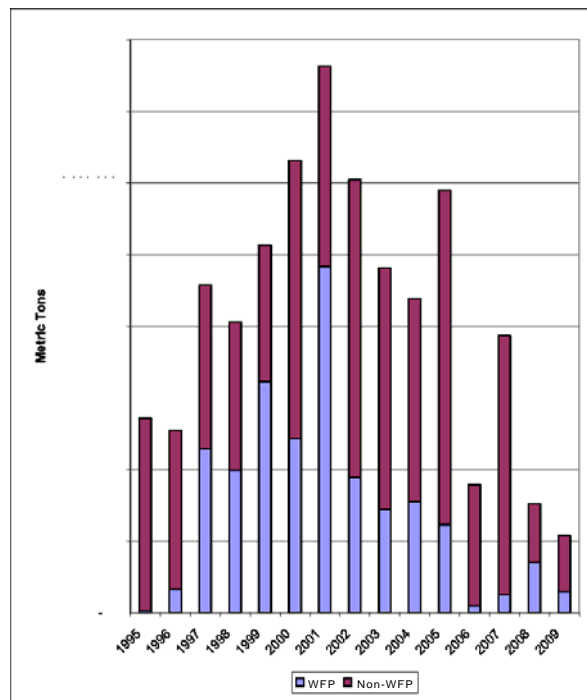
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In 1959 to 1961, deliberate policies set by Mao Zedong and the Chinese government resulted in the deaths by starvation of 30 million or more Chinese, with some Chinese estimates being substantially higher.¹ The policy decisions were multiple and occurred both before and during the famine. Although the “national” group specified in Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide was China’s own population, the Chinese events can justifiably be considered a case of genocide as the policies were clearly deliberate.

The same charge should therefore be leveled against North Korea as well.² North Korean government policies, both the maintenance of Stalinist agricultural policies for the past 50 or more years and other policies, were unquestionably the cause of the famine in North Korea in the mid- to late 1990s. Estimates of North Korean mortality due to the famine ranged between 2 to 3.5 million in a population of 21-22 million.³

This subject is current once again because North Korea appears to be threatened with famine due to the same causes as produced the 1990s famine. In 2011 North Korea asked for international food assistance. A recent report by the Congressional Research Service provides a summary of the total estimated food aid to North Korean between 1995 and 2009. During that period 75% of the food aid was been supplied by four countries: China, South Korea, the United States and Japan.

Figure I. Total Estimated Food Aid to North Korea, 1995-2009



Source: World Food Program’s International Food Aid Information System (INTERFAIS) database. From Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth Nikitin, *Foreign Assistance to North Korea*, Washington, R40095, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 20, 2012, p. 13.

At the height of the 1990s famine, North Korea had an estimated GNP of approximately \$21 billion. By all international standards, it spent an astronomical proportion of that, over 26%, on military expenditure, roughly \$5 billion or more per year.⁴ While appealing for food assistance from the World Food Programme and bilateral donors, North Korea was purchasing or attempting to purchase a multiplicity of major weapons systems during the famine: aircraft, jet engines, tanks, artillery, air defense missiles and submarines. *But most importantly, the international food assistance provided to North Korea since 1995 permitted North Korea to carry through its entire nuclear weapon development and production program, as well as the development and production of the ballistic missile delivery systems for delivering these weapons. The food deliveries also permitted the survival of the North Korean regime.*

The North Korean regime could neither have been able to survive nor been able to afford its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile system if not for the delivery of external food assistance since 1995.

¹ John S. Aird, "Recent Demographic Data from China: Problems and Prospects," in *China Under the Four Modernizations. Part I*, Joint Economic Committee, US Congress, August 13, 1982, pp. 171-223; Judith Banister, "An Analysis of Recent Data on the Population of China," *Population and Development Review*, 10, no. 2 (June 1984): 241-71; Judith Banister, *China's Changing Population*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987; and Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*, New York: Free Press, 1997.

² The North Korean government has been accused of Genocide for many years for other reasons, particularly the number of deaths in its Gulag system, sometimes estimated at approximately a million people since 1972. That is however not being discussed here. See Robert Park, "When will we stop the genocide in North Korea?," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2011, and "North Korea and the Genocide Movement," <http://hir.harvard.edu/north-korea-and-the-genocide-movement>.

³ Andrew Natsios, "The Politics of Famine in North Korea," Special Report, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, August 2, 1999; Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001.

⁴ US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1995*, Washington, DC: p. 81.