



# What Trump Should Know After the Panmunjom Summit

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The Panmunjom summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un on June 30 came as a surprise. The reunion of the two leaders, which began with a tweet from President Trump, was not a short two minute meeting, but rather the third summit with a talk that lasted more than a fifty minutes. Above all, this sudden encounter was interesting in that it marked a new turning point after the failure of the Hanoi summit. In Hanoi, Trump made big demands for denuclearization while Chairman Kim focused on lifting economic sanctions and insisted on pursuing his preferred step-by-step approach to denuclearization, simultaneously and in parallel. After the failure of the Hanoi talks, a pessimistic outlook for the US-North Korean nuclear negotiations prevailed, but new expectations have begun to emerge following the Panmunjom summit. Trump and Kim agreed to resume negotiations between working-level officials. However, it is unclear whether a concrete agreement can be reached through working-level negotiations. The difference between the two is still large.

## What the US Thinks

The United States has remained suspicious of North Korea's commitment to denuclearization, and stating that it aimed to completely dismantle all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and ballistic missile programs, including the entirety of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities as well as all nuclear materials, facilities, and biochemical weapons which are located outside of Yongbyon. The United States believes that the complete denuclearization of North Korea will result in true peace on the Korean Peninsula. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula for the US means

dismantling North Korea's nuclear program completely. The "complete denuclearization" that the US envisions means that all nuclear weapons, nuclear warheads, nuclear facilities, ballistic missiles, and weapons of mass destruction possessed by North Korea must be reported and verified from the start of implementation, even if the denuclearization is implemented in a step-by-step procedure. CVID (Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Denuclearization) and FFVD (Final Verified Denuclearization), which the United States has emphasized, are both reflective of the US position.

### **What North Korea Thinks**

However, North Korea believes that the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula should precede denuclearization and that peace on the Korean Peninsula is what will lead to denuclearization. The sequence of agreements made in Singapore also reflects this understanding. North Korea has not recognized the nuclear issue as North Korea's problem, instead recognizing it as a problem of the entire Korean Peninsula, inclusive of South Korea and the United States. In the past, Kim Il Sung argued that the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula did not originate from the North Korean nuclear program, but began with the introduction of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula by the US during the Cold War period. That is why North Korea criticizes the expression "North Korean nuclear problem" and has stuck to the expression "nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula." In addition, North Korea has argued that their nuclear weapons protect rather than threaten peace on the Peninsula. For North Korea, it is the United States that threatens the peace on the Peninsula, and the North Koreans believe that they have prevented the breakout of further war on the Korean Peninsula through nuclear deterrence. In the end, North Korea remains convinced that they can denuclearize only when the hostile relations between the US and North Korea fundamentally change and a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula has been achieved. Therefore, North Korea believes that complete guarantees of the North Korean regime should come before complete denuclearization. In the end, North Korea's concept of denuclearization means that nuclear disarmament should be implemented not only by North Korea but also by other nuclear powers including the United States.

### **What Trump Should Know about North Korea**

Kim Jong Un rejected the proposed Hanoi Agreement because the United States set the frame of negotiations in the structure of security vs. economy and demanded complete denuclearization all at once. Even though Kim Jong Un has made a strategic decision regarding denuclearization, his strategy is to negotiate denuclearization through a step-by-step approach,

simultaneously and in parallel. The US demand for a big deal far exceeded North Korea's expectations. After the Singapore summit in June 2018, North Korea believed that the US was in agreement with the North Korean approach. This was why Choi Sun Hee, vice minister of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Kim Jong Un did not understand US method of calculating the denuclearization.

Chairman Kim was embarrassed when President Trump demanded an agreement on the final status of denuclearization, including all North Korean nuclear programs, ballistic missiles, and biochemical weapons. Kim Jong Un expected at Hanoi that he could agree to the first step of a partial denuclearization measure and sought to obtain the lifting of economic sanctions in return for the promise to dismantle the regime's nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. This can be seen from Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho's statement in a press conference shortly after the talks that "it was the greatest measure that North Korean can take at the present state." Kim Jong Un's expectations were based on the step-by-step approach.

For North Korea, it is impossible to completely denuclearize with only the lifting of economic sanctions. Because North Korea wants to secure a regime guarantee and a peace regime in return for the last stage of the denuclearization procedure, it prefers the step-by-step approach rather than a major, one-stop deal. Since North Korea's security problems are focused on the abandonment of the US hostile policy toward the regime, North Korea will ultimately try to make a fundamental change in US policy toward the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's security problems will not come to an end with the declaration of the end of the Korean War or the conclusion of a peace treaty. North Korea will implement the last stage of the denuclearization procedure only when the security environment around the Korean Peninsula fundamentally changes. It is unclear what types of measures can guarantee North Korea's regime security, but it would be something like the Vietnamese case, wherein Vietnam now seeks security cooperation with the US despite the fact that the two were at war in the last century. In the end, it will not be easy for the regime to relinquish its nuclear weapons until North Korea's external security environment changes fundamentally.

### **After the Panmunjom Summit**

The Singapore Joint Statement between the US and North Korea was not particularly satisfactory, but the summit nonetheless produced an agreement. Because the Singapore statement was quite comprehensive with regard to denuclearization and a peace regime, the working-level talks after the Panmunjom summit need to focus on the details of denuclearization and the peace regime. It will begin with at least a "small deal" in which the US and North Korea exchange several

detailed agendas. At Hanoi, most people expected that Washington and Pyongyang would produce a small deal. However, both turned out to be more demanding than the other anticipated. After the Hanoi summit, expectations turned pessimistic and predicted that the nuclear negotiations would stall, leading to a new crisis like the one in 2017. However, the Panmunjom summit gave rise to a fresh wave of optimism.

So where do we go from here? Although there is a consensus that the US should pursue a big deal with FFVD, big deals involve major challenges, and doing so may lead to a breakdown in negotiations once more. Summits do not normally start with a new negotiation at the table. A detailed and specific agreement must be made in advance of a summit. The US and North Korea must focus on narrowing the gap between them during the working-level talks. The negotiations will never be easy, but both sides need to make a greater effort during the working-level negotiations. The working-level talks need to figure out a way to exchange denuclearization and a regime guarantee which can satisfy both sides. When the US demands CVID or FFVD from North Korea, the North demands CVIG or FFVG (guarantee) from the US. Thus, it is important to resolve the dilemma between the two. Unless this dilemma is resolved between the US and North Korea, the breakdown in Hanoi may be repeated in the future even after the Panmunjom summit. Thus, it is necessary to think about how the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and a North Korean regime guarantee can be implemented simultaneously and in parallel with the denuclearization procedure. Without this trade-off, North Korea will not agree to complete denuclearization. The concept of a peace regime reflects the new order on the Korean Peninsula.

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