

Diplomacy of Denuclearization between North Korea and the United States under President Donald Trump

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the diplomacy of denuclearization between North Korea and US under President Donald Trump. Historical research design was used in the study to trace the history of the North Korean nuclear programmes and other related issues; secondary data were collected from existing literature and relevant data were processed through content analysis. Realism was adopted as framework of analysis. The study found that all previous attempts at denuclearization of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) frequently failed. DPRK has been ambivalent on its denuclearization. Its readiness to negotiate at the Singapore summit was probably brought about by its harsh internal economic and social conditions occasioned by the aggressive responses of the US under President Trump. In order to facilitate diplomacy DPRK put up some positive gestures. Before the denuclearization summit, North Korea released several US hostages and also some high ranking military advisors were fired. The study also discovered that Beijing, though a major influence on DPRK has been passive and even reluctant in formulating and enforcing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions involving more punitive sanctions on North Korea. The study also found that the summit was unconventional in nature and inconclusive in its deliberations. Regardless of its outcome, the summit doused the tension that preceded it and officially set the US-DPRK relationship onto a diplomatic track. Recommendations were made based on the findings as follows: The US and DPRK should define terms and scope of the denuclearization; ensure a complete freeze of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes; openness and full declaration from North Korea of its nuclear and chemical weapons programmes and the biological programme; insistence on verification regimes; engagement of China over enforcement of sanctions on North Korea; maintenance of robust US military forces and alliances at Korean peninsula and President Donald Trump should remain vigilant in dealing with Chairman Kim because of trust deficit in Mr. Kim.

KEY WORDS: *Diplomacy, Denuclearization, North Korea, US, President Trump, Singapore Summit*

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most worrisome and protracted problems in US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era is North Korea's threatening behavior involving development of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons capabilities; and pursuit of a range of illicit activities, including proliferation. (Chanlett-Avery et al, 2018). Although since the creation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948, the United States has never had formal diplomatic relations with the DPRK, concerted efforts have been made by successive US administrations since the early 1990s using a combination of negotiations, aid, bilateral and international sanctions to end North Korea's weapons programmes. But instead of curtailing the DPRK's increasing capabilities, it has aggravated. The US interests in North Korea cover critical security, political, and human rights. US bilateral military alliances with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan obligate the United States to defend these allies from any attack from the North Korea (Chanlett-Avery et al, 2018). Thousands of US troops based in South Korea and Japan, as well as the US civilians residing in those countries are stationed within striking range of North Korean intermediate-range missiles. The rapid advances in its nuclear and long-range missile capabilities may put the US homeland at risk of a DPRK strike (Dauda, 2017.) Also any conflict in the region or regime collapse in Pyongyang would certainly have severe implications for the regional economy.

During 2016 and 2017, DPRK demonstrated its determination to become a nuclear-armed state by conducting an unprecedented series of missile launches and nuclear tests, (Haltiwanger, 2018). The potential threat posed by North Korea's ability to mount nuclear attacks against the US and her allied countries has led to a crisis in the region. Recently, the exchanges of hot rhetoric between the US and North Korea on the Missile launches and nuclear testing have escalated tensions in the region. However, recent developments in 2018, including talks between the leaders of North Korea and the US, have de-escalated the crisis.

Aside from denuclearization, North Korea has continued to demonstrate its willingness and ability to conduct cyber-attacks around the world. For example, the global Wannacry ransom ware attack in May 2017 infected many NHS organizations, causing widespread disruption across the healthcare sector. The US Government later revealed that North Korea was most probably the source of Wannacry (CRS Report, 2018). The Trump Administration initially, responded by adopting a “maximum pressure” policy that sought to coerce Pyongyang into changing its behavior through economic and diplomatic measures. Several of the elements of the officially stated policy were comparable to those employed by the Obama Administration namely: heightening up economic pressure against North Korea, attempting to persuade China and others to apply more pressure against Pyongyang, and expanding the capabilities of the US-South Korea and US-Japan alliances to counter new North Korean threats. Trump’s administration successfully led the United Nations Security Council to pass four new sanctions resolutions that have expanded the requirements for U.N. member states to halt or curtail their military, diplomatic, and economic interaction with the DPRK. (CRS Report, 2018)

Like the Obama administration, Trump Administrations pushed countries around the globe to significantly cut and/or eliminate their ties with North Korea, often in ways that go beyond UNSC requirements. The Trump Administration, however, emphasized the option of launching a preventive military strike against North Korea (Arms Control Association, 2017). But the shifts in the Administration’s public statements at times have created confusion about US policy. Over the course of his presidency, to date, Trump and senior members of his Administration have issued seemingly contradictory statements on North Korea, particularly on the questions of US conditions for negotiations, and whether the United States is prepared to launch a preventive strike against North Korea (Arms Control Association, 2017). Unlike the Obama Administration, Trump was able to put enough pressure and tact on DPRK that later brought about the Singapore summit which this study will dwell much on later.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employs realism as its framework of analysis. The Realists define foreign policy as the pursuit of national interests. To them the priority of state foreign policy should be given to achieving its selfish interests of enhancing national security, the preponderance of power, economic prosperity, and the stability of the international system (Kin-Hyun, 2017). They emphasize on military power as an ultimate means of ensuring national security. However, they oppose the use of military force for any other purpose than national security. In particular, realists disapprove of military intervention to change the politics and society of other countries (Kin-Hyun, 2017). Even if there is a serious security threat, realism prescribes diplomatic solutions first, rather than the use of armed forces (Campbell and Chollet, 2006). The exponents of the theory prefer an engagement policy based on carrot-and-stick diplomacy toward hostile foreign regimes. In other words, to induce their policy changes and cooperation, incentives, such as economic aid, regime security, and diplomatic recognition(carrot), should be accompanied by punitive measures of imposing pressure and sanctions(stick) in case of their rejecting cooperation (Haass, 2005). Major proponents of realism include: Thomas Hobbes, Nicolo Machiavelli, J. Hans Morgenthau and host of others.

As observed by Kin-Hyun, one important priority of US national interests in the post-Cold War era, from the realist point of view, is to retain its hegemony in power and security, while preventing the emergence of any challenging competitor or its allies. Similarly North Korea sees having a nuclear capability as essential to regime survival and puts premium on nuclearizing and that its nuclear status is “not a bargaining chip” and would not be relinquished even for “billions of dollars”.(Kin-Hyun,2017). This explains while it has been difficult to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea. Nevertheless, the Donald Trump’s Administration as adopted the policy of strategic accountability which called for “maximum pressure” mainly through economic sanctions on Pyongyang to stop its provocative actions and to coerce the country into the negotiation table (Kim-Hyun, 2017). Its focus on “maximum pressure” mainly based on increasing unilateral and multilateral sanctions is consistent with the realist prescription of taking punitive measures against hostile regimes, as a part of carrot-and-stick diplomacy, in the face of their recurrent non- cooperation and provocations (Haass, 2005).

A Brief Background to the North Korean Nuclear Activities

The Korean Peninsula has been officially divided into North and South since the armistice negotiations of 1953-54 (Boose, 2000). However, there had been several attempts of invasion from the North since then even though the agreement was signed by both parties. Thus, aggression and hostilities have not ceased on both sides since inception (Boose, 2000). Nevertheless, the embarkation of nuclear programmes by the North Korea according Sheriff and Yahaya was as a result of two important factors- The constant threat by the US and the lost of Soviet Union patronage. Thus, “the North Korea has periodically been subject to the threat of US conventional and nuclear strikes,...under the rubric of pre-emption. Such threats have taken on

meaning ... since the end of the cold war. The loss of Soviet patronage at the end of the cold war and the increasing disparity between the north and south Korean economies contributed to increased threat perception in the North" (Sheriff and Yahaya, 2014:193). With these developments, North Korea perceived that her security was in danger and therefore decided to go into nuclear weapons development to be able to defend itself in event of imminent threat or attack. Consequently,

The DPRK began its nuclear weapons program in 1952 with the establishment of the Atomic Energy Research Institute. By the early 1970s, the DPRK had acquired plutonium reprocessing technology from the Soviet Union. In the 1980s the DPRK constructed uranium milling facilities and a nuclear reactor; it also conducted high-explosive tests required for a nuclear bomb. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the DPRK successfully reprocessed plutonium on three occasions... In 1994, the DPRK froze its plutonium program, but began enriching uranium between 1997–1998... In 2003, the DPRK claimed that it had reprocessed 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods, giving it enough weapons-grade plutonium for six nuclear weapons. In October 2006, the DPRK tested its first nuclear weapon, becoming a verified nuclear power.... The DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons was in accordance with the 'hiding strategy', whereby a state aims to "present a *fait accompli* before the program is discovered (see Schulenburg, 2020:1)

The enormous security threats associated with such activities could not just be ignored by the international community. So, several efforts were made to address the perceived security threats by calling on the North Korea to denuclearize. Unfortunately, they seem not to have achieved this very goal as seen below.

Previous Failed Peace Efforts

It has been documented that for over 65 years, there were several attempts of negotiations and peace talks at the Korean Demilitarized Zone. The first step towards the history of peace talks between Koreas took place in 2000 (Shin 2018). In 2000, South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il met in Pyongyang to hold a first inter-Korean Summit. This was the first time for the North and South Korean leaders to hold a meeting in 50 years since the Korean War. The adopted peace agreement had several concrete ideas regarding the Korean re-unification (United States Institute of Peace 2000) Issues such as the government type /model; further cooperation in areas such as cultural, economic, health, and environment; working together to overcome political- ideological differences, to reduce military tensions, and to create a special peace zone. Reunification programmes of families that were separated by the Korean War at the beginning of 50 took place after the summit (Shin, 2018).

This summit was part of the famous "Sunshine Policy", which nowadays is perceived by many as a failed attempt (Park, 2017). This programme was meant to promote peace in Korean Peninsula by reducing armed tensions and promote joint cooperation. However, despite the diplomatic effort, many promises that came from the North Korean regime were left unfulfilled. North Korea however, continued to pursue its nuclear programme. The summit was not a success because of both countries unwillingness to participate. Three years after, it was revealed that the North Korean government was bribed by the South to allow for the meeting to take place (The New York Times, 2003).

The second summit of the year 2007 was supposed to re-affirm statement of the 2000 inter-Korean summit (Shin, 2018). Roh Moo-Hyun, the President of South Korea who shared Kim Dae-Jung's liberal ideas, held a meeting with Kim Jong-Il in 2007. The summit took place as a result of diplomatic efforts of the six countries which were supposed to lead denuclearization talks. Those six states (USA, China, Russia, Japan, North and South Korea) were working on an implementation of a denuclearization deal, according to which Pyongyang had to give up its nuclear programme (Shin, 2018). In return, North Korea should have been released from diplomatic isolation and receive a significant amount of economic aid. At the end of the summit, an eight-point statement was created, which was based upon the key principals of the previous 2000 declaration (Shin, 2018). Unfortunately, this summit was not able to stop North Korea's nuclear development programme. Furthermore, the next South Korean government decided to abolish the "sunshine policy" and resort to hardline approach (VOA 2010).

About 11 years after the second summit, the South Korean Olympic Games took place in Pyeong Chang and the world witnessed a truly unique gesture from the North and South Korean athletes when they participated as a united team. Moreover, sister of Kim Jong-un visited the South Korean President Moon Jae-in. She delivered a message from the North Korean leader stating that the South Korean President was invited to North (Fifield and Parker 2018). Shortly after the Olympics, it was announced that the third inter-Korean Summit would be held in April, 2018. The Chairman of DPRK Kim Jong-un, and the President of the South Korea, Moon Jae-in, held a meeting in a village near the Korean DMZ (Campbell 2018) during which it was agreed that a summit will be held later in the year 2018 to start the process of Korean Peninsula's denuclearization. Together with that, the leaders of both countries pledged to further cooperation between each other and reduce the military tensions that have been escalating years before. Once again, it was agreed upon to later transform the Korean Armistice Agreement into a full peace treaty to formally end the Korean War (Campbell 2018).

The third submit had a pure symbolic meaning. The nuclear testing programmes have been suspended for now, though they might resume soon just as it happened before. Apart from that there was an evident disagreement between North and South Korea over the precise meaning of “denuclearization” (Campbell 2018). The South believed that both sides should have reduced nuclear tensions, with North Korea making more effort. Kim Jong-un, however, viewed that “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” meant reducing nuclear capabilities of the South Korean-US side mainly.

Over the years, North Korea’s stated demands in negotiating the cessation of its weapons programmes have repeatedly changed, and have at times included US recognition of the regime as a nuclear weapons state and a peace treaty with the United States as a prerequisite to denuclearization (Kim, 2018). Identifying patterns in North Korean behavior is challenging, as Pyongyang often weaves together different approaches to the outside world. North Korean behavior has equivocated between limited cooperation, including multiple agreements on denuclearization, and overt provocations, including testing several long-range ballistic missiles over the last 20 years and six nuclear devices in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016, and 2017. DPRK willingness to negotiate has apparently been driven by its internal conditions, namely: food shortages or economic desperation. This could push North Korea to reengage in talks, usually to extract more aid from China or, in the past, from the United States and/or South Korea. DPRK has proven skillful at exploiting divisions among the other five parties and taking advantage of political transitions in Washington to stall the nuclear negotiating process (Kimn, 2018).

The seeming ambivalence of North Korea’s demands has contributed to arguments over the utility of negotiating with North Korea. Delury argues not only that negotiations are necessary to reduce the chances of conflict, but also that they are feasible, because Kim Jong-UN’s “real goal is economic development.” The concept of a basic bargain in which North Korea would obtain a more secure relationship with the United States, a formal end to the Korean War, as well as economic benefits and sanctions removal in exchange for nuclear weapons and missile dismantlement is the focus of Kim Jong- UN (Delury, 2017). His increased emphasis on economic development is often mentioned as a sign that he has made a decision to denuclearize (Delury, 2017). However, without breaking free of isolation and obtaining relief from sanctions, it will be difficult for North Korea to achieve meaningful economic development. Several analysts believe, however, that the North Korean regime, regardless of inducements, will not voluntarily give up its nuclear weapons capability. (Sang-hun, 2013) A capability after years of observing North Korea’s negotiating behaviour; many analysts now believe that Pyongyang’s demands are tactical moves and that North Korea sees having a nuclear capability as essential to regime survival and have no intention of giving up its nuclear weapons in exchange for aid and recognition. (Pollack, 2015)

The DPRK frequent statements of its determination to maintain its nuclear weapons programme have led analysts to doubt the idea that the pledge at the Singapore summit has drastically changed its intentions. In April, 2010, for instance, North Korea reiterated its demand to be recognized as an official nuclear weapons state and said it would increase and modernize its nuclear deterrent. (Hyun-Wook, 2010). On April 13, 2012, the same day as a failed rocket launch, the North Korean constitution was revised to describe the country as a “nuclear-armed nation.” In March 2013, North Korea declared that its nuclear weapons are “not a bargaining chip” and would not be relinquished even for “billions of dollars” (Sang-Hun, 2013). Following the successful test of the Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile in November 2017, official North Korean news outlets announced that the DPRK had “finally realized the great historic course of completing the state nuclear force.” North Korea has also suggested that it will not relinquish its nuclear stockpile until all nuclear weapons are eliminated worldwide, (Narang and Panda, 2018).

It is believed that the multinational military intervention in 2011 in Libya, which abandoned its nuclear weapon programme in exchange for the removal of sanctions, might have had the unpleasant side effect of reinforcing the perceived value of nuclear arms for regime security. Thus, North Korean leaders may believe that, without the security guarantee of nuclear weapons, they are vulnerable to instability and overthrow by a rebellious element aided by outside military intervention.

US and North Korean Diplomatic Engagement on Denuclearization in Historical Perspective The Bilateral Agreed Framework (1994-2002)

US intelligence detected, in 1986 that North Korea started a plutonium production reactor and reprocessing plant at Yongbyon that were not subject to international monitoring as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which North Korea joined in 1985. The development brewed crisis as the North, in the early 1990s, after agreeing to and then obstructing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections of these facilities, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT (CRS Report, 2018). However, threat of sanctions at the United Nations Security Council and a diplomatic mission from President Jimmy Carter persuaded North Korea to engage in negotiations which brought about the US-North Korea 1994 Agreed Framework. The United States agreed to arrange for North Korea to receive two Light Water Reactor (LWR) nuclear power plants and heavy fuel oil in exchange for North Korea freezing and eventually dismantling

its plutonium programme under IAEA supervision. The framework also set a path toward normalization of diplomatic and economic relations as well as security assurances. (CSR Report, 2018)

Consequently, North Korea froze its plutonium programme and the heavy fuel oil promised by the US was delivered to the North Koreans. However, North Korea did not comply with commitments to declare all nuclear facilities to the IAEA and put them under safeguards. In 2002, the George W. Bush Administration confronted North Korea about a suspected secret uranium enrichment programme, the existence of which the North Koreans denied publicly (CSR Report 2018). The denial made United States stopped further implementation, North Korea then expelled IAEA inspectors from the Yongbyon site, announced its withdrawal from the NPT, and restarted its reactor and reprocessing facility after an eight-year freeze (CSR Report 2018).

Missile Negotiations

In 1996 the Clinton Administration began pursuing a series of negotiations with North Korea that focused on curbing the DPRK's missile programme and ending its proliferation, principally to countries in the Middle East. In September 1999, North Korea agreed to a moratorium on testing long-range missiles in exchange for the partial lifting of US sanctions and a continuation of bilateral talks. The final agreement which was to be made in October 2000, proved elusive, however. North Korea maintained its moratorium until July 2006. (CRS Report, 2018)

Six-Party Talks (2003-2008)

Further moves to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue extended to include: USA, China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia under the George W. Bush Administration. Six rounds of the "Six-Party Talks" hosted by China from 2003 to 2008 yielded occasional progress. The summit took place as a result of diplomatic efforts of the six countries which were supposed to lead denuclearization talks. Those six states were working on an implementation of a denuclearization deal, according to which Pyongyang had to give up its pursuit of nuclear programme (Shin, 2018). In return, North Korea should have been released from diplomatic isolation and receive a significant amount of economic aid. At the end of the summit, an eight-point statement was created, which was based upon the key principals of the previous 2000 declaration (Shin 2018). Eventually, the Talks failed to resolve the fundamental issue of North Korean nuclear arms. The most promising breakthrough occurred in 2005, with the issuance of a Joint Statement in which North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons programmes in exchange for aid, a US security guarantee, and talks over normalization of relations with the United States (CSR Report, 2018). Notwithstanding the promise of the talks, the process eventually broke down, primarily due to the inability to come to an agreement on measures to verify North Korea's compliance.

Obama Administration's "Strategic Patience" Policy and Leap Day Agreement

Obama Administration pursued a policy of "strategic patience" in the face of North Korea's persistent nuclear programme pursuit and cycles of provocations. In January 2009, Pyongyang committed a series of provocations, including a test of long-range ballistic missile on April 5 and a second nuclear test on May 14. The UN Security Council in Resolution 1874 of June 2009 imposed further economic sanctions on North Korea. UN member states by the sanction are to inspect DPRK's cargo and destroy any goods suspected of being connected to its nuclear programme, and extending the arms embargo on it (UNSC, 2009).

The Obama Administration formulated and mostly held to "strategic patience" in close coordination with the six-party allies in order to cope with North Korea provocations (VOA, 2009). By this policy the US would not engage in negotiations with North Korea until the latter first shows the concrete evidence of commitment to denuclearization. Based on such a policy, Washington demanded that Pyongyang should first "take concrete, irreversible denuclearization steps toward fulfillment of the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks," as a precondition for negotiation (US Department of State Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (USDSBEAPA, 2016). The policy included closely cooperating with the US allies, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan, in deterring and taking actions against North Korea's provocations, and pressuring Pyongyang through multilateral U.N. and unilateral sanctions to halt and abandon its nuclear programme. The policy also involved persuading China, North Korea's long-standing ally and largest trading partner, to put necessary pressure more on the country to stop its nuclear programmes and military provocations (CRS Report, 2018).

If North Korea dismantled its nuclear programmes and returned to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards, the five parties would agree to provide North Korea with US assurance against an attack on the North; the eventual normalization of relations with the US and Japan; economic aid and cooperation; and the negotiation for a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. (Kim-Hyun, 2017). However, as North Korea continued to develop nuclear weapons, the

US embarked on imposing punishing sanctions including multilateral ones against it, as part of efforts to restart denuclearization negotiations.

The US special representatives for North Korea policy held high-level talks three times. President Jimmy Carter also, accompanied by the former leaders of Finland, Norway, and Ireland, visited Pyongyang, on April 25-27, 2011, to have meetings with its foreign Minister and the President of its Parliament (The Guardian, 2011). Also the US held a round of bilateral talks with North Korea on February 23-24, 2012, and they reached the so-called “Leap Day Agreement” on February 29. Under this agreement, North Korea would impose a moratorium on its nuclear weapons and long-range missile tests, and suspend its uranium enrichment activities at the Yongbyon nuclear facility, and allow the IAEA inspectors to monitor the suspension. In return for these steps, the US would provide the country with 240,000 metric tons of food aid under the intensive monitoring (Nuland, 2012). This agreement, if fully implemented, was expected to lead to the resumption of the six-party talks for denuclearization. However, the agreement failed to push through. Pyongyang launched a satellite using a three-stage rocket, on April 13, 2012, in an attempt to develop ballistic missile technology, and Washington responded by cancelling its plan of food aid to North Koreans (Kim-Hyun, 2017).

Despite attempts through direct diplomacy and series of punitive sanctions to persuade Pyongyang to stop provocations and return to the Six-Party talks, the policy of strategic patience failed to stop North Korea’s illicit nuclear and missile programmes and ultimately, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It also failed to convince China to put diplomatic pressure and strictly implement U.N. sanctions against North Korea to the extent that the country could suspend its nuclear programme and return to the negotiation table. Beijing had been passive and even reluctant in formulating and enforcing UNSC resolutions involving more punitive sanctions on North Korea. (Kim-Hyun, 2017). Lastly, strategic patience policy failed ostensibly because North Korea remained determined to become a nuclear weapons state which has enough nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles to assure regime security. Going by antecedence the country seemed to have no intention of giving up its nuclear programme in return for incentives, like economic aid and diplomatic recognition.

President Trump and the 2018 Singapore Summit

North Korea intensified its provocations since President Donald Trump took over office on January 20, 2017. It continued by conducting nuclear tests and carrying out multiple ballistic missile tests. In the face of such provocations, the Trump Administration has settled on a new North Korea policy, while taking defensive measures to strengthen deterrence against them. (Kim-Hyun, 2017). The administration adopted a new North Korea policy, called “strategic accountability,” which centered on “maximum pressure and engagement” toward the denuclearization of the communist regime. In this new policy, US policy makers have considered North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons as an urgent national security threat and top foreign policy priority. The ultimate goal of the US North Korea policy under Trump is to accomplish the “complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (Kim-Hyun, 2017). The components of the strategic accountability policy include:

1. Tightening pressure on North Korea through unilateral and multilateral economic sanctions (maximum pressure);
2. Not pursuing a policy of regime change through military means;
3. Actively engaging with China to exert enough pressure on North Korea to change its behaviour;
4. Strengthening defense posture and military readiness, through close cooperation with South Korea and Japan, against North Korea’s provocations;
5. Seeking conditional engagement with the communist regime. (Reuters, 2017).

The policy of strategic accountability calls for “maximum pressure” mainly through economic sanctions on Pyongyang to stop its provocative actions and to coerce the country into the negotiation table (Kim-Hyun, 2017). Under this policy, President Trump imposed on North Korea sanctions targeting those providing the country with crude oil and other products that help its nuclear and missile programme. (*The Korea Times*, 2017)

The Trump Administration also focused its pressure policy on imposing multilateral sanctions through the U.N. Security Council resolutions against North Korea. Its officials made it clear that the US would continue “to consolidate international unity on the North Korean issue through increased engagement at the U.N., at regional diplomatic fora, and in capitals around the world (*The Korea Times*, 2017). To this end, US led U.N. Security Council to unanimously adopt Resolution 2371 on August 5 to impose more punitive sanctions on the communist regime in response to its two tests of ICBMs in July (Nichols, 2017). The resolution’s provisions included a complete ban on exports of coal, iron, iron ore, lead,

lead ore, and seafood which would reduce its annual export revenue of about \$3 billion by a third. The resolution also prohibited countries from increasing the number of North Korean workers hired by them and from opening new joint ventures with the communist nation or expanding existing joint ventures through any new investment. Furthermore, it called for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks for denuclearization negotiations (Kim-Hyun, 2017).

The Trump Administration policy has been more comprehensive and intensive than that of the Obama Administration. The policy of “Maximum Pressure” of the Trump Administration has more actively expanded and increased multilateral and unilateral sanctions on the Kim Jong-un regime with an explicit goal of isolating its economy. More than ever, the Trump Administration has stepped up pressure through a series of unilateral economic sanctions. (Kim-Hyun, 2017). Before the US President Donald Trump met with Chairman Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader regarding the denuclearization programmes, several issues came up. First of all, there were questions regarding the actual process of denuclearization, which required further conceptualization. Secondly, in May Donald Trump cancelled his scheduled travel to Singapore (where the denuclearization summit was planned to be held) in an open letter to Kim Jong-un (Morris 2018). Below his typical 'thanking passage' of the letter, Trump openly blamed the North Korean side for expressing hostile rhetoric towards the US and said that it would be a “missed opportunity” for both countries, as well as, for the rest of the world to hold the peace talks (Morris 2018).

Nevertheless, Trump stated that he would still be looking forward to dialogue and meeting Kim Jong-un in person, the situations notwithstanding. He also thanked the North Korean leader for releasing three American hostages and allowing them to return home, saying it was a “beautiful gesture” (Morris 2018). Together with this statement, Trump added that if Kim Jong-un changed his anti-US rhetoric, then the American side would gladly reconsider the meeting (Morris, 2018).

Once again, the possibility shows up for the 65 years old conflict to be resolved, though one has to realize that the process of eliminating hostilities and disputes on Korean Peninsula may take longer time. One of the reasons that make this case so complicated is the fact that interests of many international actors are interconnected in Korea. On the 12th June 2018, the US President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held a first historic summit in Singapore as it was originally planned (Reuters 2018). The profound talks primarily focused on launching of new US-DPRK relations and ensuring of a long-term peace on the Korean Peninsula. Both sides expressed their commitments to the cause. Donald Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK, while Kim Jong-un reaffirmed his firm position regarding the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. At the end of the summit a joint statement was released where the following points are supposed to be the main action plan for the actors (Reuters, 2018):

1. The United States and the DPRK commit to establish new US-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the people of the two countries for peace and prosperity;
2. The United States and DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula;
3. Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and;
4. The United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

The agreement made no mention of the DPRK's ballistic missile programme. The two sides agreed to conduct follow-on negotiations, to be led on the US side by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. As a mark of commitment to the truce, President Trump announced, in the conference following the summit, that the United States would suspend annual US-South Korea military exercises, which he called “war games” and “provocative” (Reuters, 2018). The move, which was not accompanied by any apparent commensurate move by Pyongyang, reportedly surprised South Korea and US military commanders, would by Trump, save “a tremendous amount of money, (Reuters, 2018). Trump also conveyed a hope of eventually withdrawing the approximately 30,000 US troops stationed in South Korea. The week after the summit, the Defense Department announced that the annual US-South Korea “military” exercises scheduled for August would be cancelled (Reuters, 2018).

Some Reactions on the Summit

Different reactions have trailed the summit since the two leaders met with some analysts observing that the agreement covered ground that had been included in previous agreements with North Korea, although those agreements were not made by the DPRK leader himself. Enthusiasts of the agreement point out that the suspension of missile and nuclear tests would reduce North Korea's ability to further advance its capability (Duyeon Kim, 2018). Critics of the agreement however, point out the lack of a timeframe or any reference to

verification mechanisms for the denuclearization process, as well as the lack of commitment by Kim to dismantle the DPRK's ballistic missile programme would frustrate the process (Michaels, 2018). The definition of denuclearization, the sequencing of the process of denuclearization, as well as the establishment of a peace regime, and normalization of diplomacy are undefined (Reuters, 2018). Naturally, the denuclearization of North Korea won't happen in a single day after the summit, but the fact that leaders were willing to hold such significant summit together shows signs of a certain progress and leaves hope for the solution of this long conflict. Fortunately, Kim Jong-un, in September 2018, set a timeline of completing denuclearization before the end of 2021.

North Korea has so far received several significant concessions (Chang –May-Choon, 2018) without giving much in return. In several ways the United States emerged from the Singapore summit at a greater disadvantage than when it began. Regardless of its outcome, a meeting between the President of the United States and the North Korean leader was irrefutably historic. After about 70 years of hostility and manifold instances of extreme tension, the meeting of the two leaders offered a moment of hope despite all the skepticism, doubt, and distrust that infuses US-DPRK relations. Despite the significant disappointment of the summit overall, it did have some tangible results, (Bowden, 2018).

The summit officially set the US-DPRK relationship onto a diplomatic track. Whereas it is unclear if this process will generate any tangible results, it is far better than the pre-summit tension and hostile rhetoric. North Korea committed to recovering of American POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those remains already identified. While this is a positive gesture from Pyongyang, we should recall that they have in the past demanded payment for the return of the remains.

Considering the shortcomings of the summit North Korea has made no new commitments to denuclearization, and in fact has backed away from its previous commitments (Narang and Panda, 2018). Kim was able to simply reiterate the commitment made at Panmunjom in April that "South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, (Narang and Panda, 2018). There is no deadline for them to eliminate their nuclear capabilities, or even freeze their continued production.

North Korea's denuclearization commitment made at the summit was the least specific commitment it has ever made, for example, in 2005 as a result of the Six-Party Talks process, North Korea agreed to "verifiable" denuclearization and to "abandoning all its nuclear weapons and nuclear programmes and returning, at an early date" to the NPT, (Reuters, 2018). The reality is that the commitment Kim made is a significant downgrade from any of its previous commitments. Also, the joint statement from Singapore summit did not mention human rights, other weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles or verification, meaning the president could only point to his personal trust in Kim Jong-un.

Considering North Korea's repeated history of violating past agreements, there is no reason for a blind trust. Kim rules a regime that commits systematic, gross human rights violations against his own people (Ma, 2018) and is believed to have directed acts of aggression against ROK and the rapid acceleration of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile testing programme upon taking power. Yet in the Singapore joint statement and in the President's comments since then, there has been no mention of verification or enforcement. Instead, the President has repeatedly described the trust he holds for Kim Jong-un. Their pledge to completely denuclearize the Korean peninsula notwithstanding, Washington and Pyongyang have yet to agree on a common definition of denuclearization without a common understanding of what is to be achieved, it is more likely that negotiations will not be successful. Establishing a common understanding of the terms being used will be an essential step in the diplomatic process. Despite the president's claims, North Korea remains a significant threat to the United States and her allies in East Asia. While the President's summit with Kim may have generated some goodwill and even built personal trust between the two leaders, North Korea has not given up a single warhead or ballistic missile, (Narang and Panda, 2018).

The summit was a tremendous propaganda victory for Kim Jong UN. This is why previous US presidents have refused to meet with North Korean leaders – doing so in it is a major concession and conveys tremendous legitimacy to the North Koreans. (Narang and Panda, 2018) . Images of Kim's meeting with the President of the United States will likely be used for years to show his people that he is respected and admired around the world and is considered an equal to the world's most powerful leaders. He can show the North Korean flag sitting next to the American flag and tell his people that his leadership has made the DPRK respected as an equal to the United States and recognized as a *de facto* nuclear power.

However, to draw a historic parallel, the so-called 'friendly' attitude of the US President towards Kim Jong-un in the frameworks of the 2018 Singapore summit, was reminiscent of the attitude of the West relation towards dictator regimes when there is a possibility for mutual talks on an important issue such as a question of denuclearization. At such times, the West, just as the US now, opts not to pressure the other side of negotiations table too much about their disagreements and possible violations of the international law, as that might result in sinking of the deal (Ma, 2018). And deals such as the recent one from Singapore, do not happen very often.

It is even more valuable diplomatic success if we consider how hostile character of the relation between the DPRK and USA usually is. It should also be mentioned that right before the Singapore summit, Kim Jong-un ordered several high- ranking military officials to be fired (Smith, 2018). This could be considered as another gesture that the North was seriously willing to hold peace talks with the US.

Some observers assert that the 2018 Singapore summit conferred a degree of legitimacy on North Korea as a nuclear state, in that the US President sat down with Kim as he would any other world leader and agreed to the “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” (Smith, 2018). The summit may have satisfied some of North Korea’s past demands: chiefly; the cancelation of US-ROK military exercises, the easing of sanctions implementation, and the prestige conferred by meeting with other heads of state, including the President of the United States.

China got everything it wanted China has long sought for the United States to be committed to a diplomatic process and to suspend its military exercises in Korea. Beijing increasingly views issues on the Korean peninsula through the lens of geopolitical competition with the United States and seeks to diminish American power and influence in Korea. Further, China has long sought to cancel major US - ROK joint military exercises and inject turbulence into the Alliance – both of which President Trump fulfilled unilaterally (Denmark, 2018). The United States should engage China over enforcement of sanctions on North Korea. China has softened its enforcement of economic sanctions on North Korea, both to thwart US efforts to maintain pressure on Pyongyang and to build a stronger bilateral relationship with Kim (Denmark, 2018). The Trump administration should create opportunity to point to its tacit adoption of China’s preferred strategy in order to sustain Beijing’s continued enforcement of sanctions. This may be important, as China had already begun to soften its enforcement of sanctions weeks before the summit.

Ironically the Singapore summit may inject new turbulence into US alliances with Japan and the ROK. The Trump’s expansive praise of Kim Jong UN and his willingness to make significant concessions - despite making so little progress on denuclearization – would inflame allied concerns about the reliability of the United States. Giving away significant mechanisms of alliance cooperation without coordination might instill fears that the United States would make another deal with North Korea that undermines their interests.(Ma, 2018).

Due to the current US administration’s penchant for not consulting, clarifying, and coordinating with its allies, Trump’s offerings to Kim, such as the cessation of an upcoming large-scale US-South Korea military exercise, will be viewed with dismay and suspicion, (Michael, 2018) while President Trump may believe that he “gave up nothing other than agreeing to meet” with Kim, as he said during the press conference, “the things of little value being negotiated away by the US” may be precisely those that matter critically to its regional allies--- South Korea and Japan, (Michael, 2018). The decision to temporarily halt the exercise, which clearly will be difficult to resume (because Pyongyang can accuse the US and South Korea of military escalation) may be leading both Seoul and Tokyo to rethink the efficacy of their standing alliances with the US The series of signals both countries are receiving as fall outs of the summit countries return to self-help example involving independent denuclearization and militarization, this becoming a more realistic recourse by look of things.

In the light of the potential trail of destruction Trump’s summit overtures may leave in Northeast Asia’s psyche, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, is saddled with the onerous task of clarifying and coordinating with regional allies (Reuters, 2018). He is to perform the necessary ‘science’ of good deal-making although a little late to mitigate the risks of Trump’s prior art. His performance would go a long way at shaping relations with regional allies. Hopefully, there may be many more positive diplomatic currents running behind the scene worthy of denuclearization that we cannot yet see and feel – for now. The world continues to expect the unexpected in the Trump-Kim era.

Naturally, this summit can be considered as one of the major steps in the peace-building process. Now, the crucial task for the United States and the DPRK is to continue their pursuit for this mutual goal and further cooperation in this sphere as the direct dialogue was already established. As stated after the summit, the both countries want to maintain the dialogue through a series of follow-on negotiations, led by the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and a relevant high-level DPRK official, to implement the outcomes of the US-DPRK summit. The groundwork for actual relation- building was prepared and concrete actions need to be taken.

III. CONCLUSION

Having looked at major proposals and attempts towards peace, it becomes apparent how challenging the current situation is. Comparing all the previous summits and the denuclearization summit of Singapore, it can be categorically said that; the outcome is not clear yet. Many of the promises of the previous summits were left unfulfilled despite various attempts to start peaceful negotiations with the North. Moreover, North Korea has continued its nuclear programmes and openly threatening US and allies such as South Korea and Japan. One could rightly say categorically that the aggressive responses of the US under president Trump led to the 2018 peace talks. In order to facilitate diplomacy, DPRK put up some positive gestures, before the denuclearization

summit, by releasing the several US hostages during Mike Pompeo's visit and also some high ranking military advisors were removed before the summit. The timing of these actions was perfect thus; it can be seen as a well-planned gesture, not a mere coincidence. It is not too early to say whether the 2018 Singapore summit Agreement will be honored or not. For now, the summit can be considered a historic success. It has greatly reduced the tensions which were present before summit was held. The whole world was on the edge of a nuclear war in 2017 when North Korea launched nuclear missiles near the Guam base in Japan. The summit gave a good groundwork for negotiation towards peace and must be commended.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. President Donald Trump should remain clear-eyed about who he is dealing with. The threat from North Korea remains real, and Kim should not be blindly trusted.
2. After the Singapore summit, the difficult work of diplomacy and denuclearization still lies ahead, while it is too soon to know whether the diplomatic process that has been put in place will ultimately be successful, the United States has an opportunity to add specifics to the broad principles agreed to in Singapore.
3. A complete freeze of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes is an early step in facilitating swift diplomatic process. This is to keep track with denuclearization process Pompeo stated he expects to end by 2020.
4. Openness and full declaration from North Korea of its nuclear and chemical weapons programmes, and the biological programme it is suspected of possessing. Without this, it will be impossible to achieve denuclearization to any degree of confidence.
5. Insistence on verification regimes to accompany any concession North Korea may make toward denuclearization. Without verification, any North Korean concession should be viewed with deep skepticism.
6. The United States should engage China, as a major stake holder, over enforcement of sanctions on North Korea. This may be important, as China had already begun to soften its enforcement of sanctions weeks before the summit.
7. United States should ensure that its military forces and alliances in the region remain ready and robust considering the continuing threat posed by North Korea.

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