

Article

North Korea-US summit: what its failure means for the peninsula's future

Lim, Sojin

Available at <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/30763/>

Lim, Sojin ORCID: 0000-0003-1395-7672 (2019) North Korea-US summit: what its failure means for the peninsula's future. The Conversation .

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work.

For more information about UCLan's research in this area go to <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/researchgroups/> and search for <name of research Group>.

For information about Research generally at UCLan please go to <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/>

All outputs in CLoK are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including Copyright law. Copyright, IPR and Moral Rights for the works on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/policies/>



Academic rigour, journalistic flair

Arts + Culture Business + Economy Cities Education Environment + Energy Health + Medicine **Politics + Society** Science + Technology



North Korea-US summit: what its failure means for the peninsula's future

February 28, 2019 1.03pm GMT

EPA Images

- Email
- Twitter 5
- Facebook 77
- LinkedIn
- Print

The summit talks between North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, and US president, Donald Trump, began in a climate of surprise and expectation in Singapore in June 2018. They have now ended (for the time being) in disappointment in Hanoi, Vietnam, with Trump walking out.

The US president said: “It was all about the the sanctions. They wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety and we couldn’t do that ... Sometimes you have to walk and this was one of those times.”

But is this the full story? Time will tell.

Trump-Kim summit ends without a deal

Watch later Share

Author



Sojin Lim

Senior Lecturer in Korean Studies, North Korean Studies MA & Asia Pacific Studies MA Courses Leader, Deputy Director of the International Institute of Korean Studies, University of Central Lancashire

Disclosure statement

Sojin Lim does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.



Either way, when Kim and Trump first met last year in Singapore, it was viewed as a victory for Kim's gesture politics and a ray of hope for stability in the region. But as the latest round of talks ends prematurely without agreement, it seems Vietnam, the host, is the only winner – thanks to the summit drawing attention to the recent success of that country's impressive economic development.

But while the US, North Korea and Vietnam have been dominating headlines, where has South Korea – the other principal stakeholder – been? So far, it seems to have been conspicuously absent. Is this because South Korea was not a part of the armistice agreement (between North Korea, the US, China and the UN) that halted the Korean War? Or is it because South Korea ultimately wouldn't benefit from any North Korea-US agreement?

Certainly, South Korea is an immediate victim of the failed Hanoi summit. As soon as Trump abandoned the talks, the South Korean stock market fell dramatically. If Kim now resumes missile tests, South Korea would be the nation most at threat.

Indeed, even if Trump agrees eventually to lift the sanctions on North Korea, it would likely be South Korea that would have to provide most of the financial support to North Korea. The only immediate benefit for South Korea, if future negotiations between Kim and Trump go well, would be a diminished threat of war.

Not all doom and gloom

But South Korea could also benefit economically – at least in the long term – in a post-sanction environment. It could, for example, reopen the joint Kaesong Industrial Complex, which would benefit some small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in South Korea. South Korea could also expect a rising employment rate, due to more business opportunities with North Korea and beyond, and market expansion through the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund (IKCF). The IKCF was established in 1990 under the

Partners



University of Central Lancashire provides funding as a member of The Conversation UK.

The Conversation UK receives funding from these organisations

[View the full list](#)

CC BY ND



We believe in the free flow of information

Republish our articles for free, online or in print, under Creative Commons licence.

[Republish this article](#)

Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund Act to promote mutual understanding and socioeconomic cooperation between the Koreas. Anticipating a lifting of sanctions, South Korea increased its IKCF budget to US\$890.7m in 2019, a 15% increase on 2018.

With sanctions lifted, South Korea could also expect increased trade and tourism profits by linking railways between the two Koreas. Indeed, one of the main reasons why Kim took the train from North Korea to Vietnam was to send a message to South Korea: if South Korea pushes for an end to sanctions, it could run its railways through the north and connect with trade routes in China, Russia and Vietnam.

But these benefits rely on one key caveat: they will only happen if either North Korea or the US gives way to the other. And until that happens, this chicken-or-egg dilemma will worsen relations between the two Koreas.

Will he or won't he?

It seems unlikely that Kim will surrender his nuclear programme. As the second summit was staged, on February 27, news broke of another well-known nuclear state, Pakistan, reportedly shooting down Indian military aircraft over Kashmir. The Pakistani prime minister, Imran Khan, immediately called a meeting of Pakistan's National Command Authority and ordered a no fly zone over the country, later commenting that given “the weapons they (India) have and we have, can we afford a miscalculation?”

The two events may seem unconnected, but it is highly likely that this has reaffirmed to Kim why he needs nuclear weapons. Remaining a de facto nuclear state is key to Kim ensuring his regime's survival. Nuclear capability is certainly not something he will readily concede.



Photo released by the North Korean Central News Agency showing a Hwasong-15 ballistic missile during the 70th founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army in Pyongyang. February 8, 2018. EPA Images

It is also doubtful whether Trump truly wants to pay too much attention to North Korea's denuclearisation and economic development. It's more likely that Trump is using his summits with Kim to strengthen his own domestic standing. Trump announced he was shelving an earlier second summit last year so he could focus on the mid-term elections – a ploy, perhaps, to attract more votes. And it's perfectly possible now that he's using the Hanoi summit to distract people from his ongoing scandals at home. Again, on the day Trump met Kim, Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, was giving highly critical testimony to Congress about his dealings with Trump.

And so South Korean president Moon Jae-in seems stuck between North Korea and the US – neither of whom seem entirely committed to their summit's success. Meanwhile, Moon will face growing domestic criticism from conservatives at home over his growing IKCF budget – and the ongoing lack of results. There is still hope for the Korean peninsula, but it is dwindling. And if Moon is to survive, and South Korea is to benefit, he will have to find novel ways of getting Kim and Trump back to the negotiating table. It will be no easy task.

North Korea US Vietnam Kim Jong-Un Global perspectives US-North Korea summit

Tweet Share Get newsletter

fantasy: The US-North Korea summit ends abruptly in Hanoi

to give up its nuclear weapons, and how he can do better at the next summit

hopes for peace on peninsula

keep calling North Korea names, it will only prolong conflict

4

Comments

Oldest

Newest

Sign in to comment

Show all comments

Most popular on The Conversation

Quantum physics: our study suggests objective reality doesn't exist

People with depression use language differently – here's how to spot it

Prince Andrew claims he 'didn't sweat' – here's the science

Kombucha, kimchi and yogurt: how fermented foods could be harmful to your health

'4°C of global warming is optimal' – even Nobel Prize winners are getting things catastrophically wrong

'I have a job but I'm homeless' – the working poor who can't afford to rent

Sleep-training and babies: why 'crying it out' is best avoided

Can this new anti-ageing supplement turn back the clock?

How to stay fit into your 60s and beyond

The mysterious 'Tully Monster' fossil just got more mysterious

Events

"Diet, obesity and health: from science to policy" with Prof Susan Jebb (Live Stream Available) — Oxford, Oxfordshire

Dragon Hall Debates: Surveillance — Norwich, Norfolk

Public Lecture: Doing Business Better - should Reading firms have a social purpose? by Professor Emma Borg — Reading, West Berkshire

"Plant genetics from Mendel to Monsanto" with Dame Ottoline Leyser — Oxford, Oxfordshire

Double Identity in the world of the Spanish Inquisition — Portsmouth, Hampshire

MORE EVENTS

Expert Database

Find experts with knowledge in:*

Community standards

Republishing guidelines

Friends of The Conversation

Research and Expert Database

Analytics

Events

Our feeds

Donate

Who we are

Our charter

Our team

Our blog

Partners and funders

Resource for media

Contact us

Get our free daily newsletter



