

The Kim-Trump Summit: Why Now? Why Not Before? Why Not Later?

By [Prof. Joseph H. Chung](#)

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Early in the morning of June 12, 2018, the world watched Kim Jong-un, supreme leader of North Korea and Donald Trump, president of the United States shaking hands in front of the main entrance of Hotel Capella in Singapore.

It was a hand-shake of the century.

And the world was puzzled.

After all, only a few months ago, they were exchanging not-so- friendly remarks on each other and, now, they shook hands as if they were friends who met again after long separation.

How is this possible?

We must remember that the global cold war between the U.S.-led world and the Soviet-led part of the world lasted for forty years from 1950 to 1990, while the bilateral cold war between North Korea and the U.S.- South Korea alliance lasted already 28 years and may last longer. Why?

This paper argues that the duration of the cold war on the Korean peninsula could depend on two factors: the logical behaviour of the players and unexpected historical opportunities.

Logical Behaviour of Pyongyang, Seoul and Washington

There are three players directly involved in the dynamics of the Korean nuclear crisis, namely North Korea, the U.S. and South Korea.

The duration of the cold war depends on each player's evaluation of the net benefits (benefit over cost) of the cold war.

If the given player thinks that the cold war brings net benefit, it would want to prolong the cold war. On the other hand, if the cold war brings net loss, the player would try to end it.

However, the actual duration of the cold war depends essentially on the net benefit of the **dominating player**. And the dominating player is obviously Washington, although the conservative government of South Korea has played the role of supporting Washington's game.

So, I am saying that the cold war in the Korean peninsula which lasted 28 years is due to the

fact it had been beneficial to Washington and the conservatives in South Korea.

This paper makes two arguments.

First, the cold war lasted so long, because it has been beneficial to Washington and South Korean conservatives.

Second, the success of the Singapore Agreement depends on how Washington and the South Korean conservatives evaluate the peace in the Korean peninsula in terms of cost-benefit deriving from the Agreement.

North Korea

As far as North Korea is concerned, the cold war has been a nightmare. More than 20 % of its population, all its factories, dwellings, roads, bridges and all other infrastructure facilities were destroyed by American B-29 bombers during the Korean war.(Professor Michel Chossudovsky: North Korea and Danger of Nuclear War. The Demilitarization of the Korean Peninsula, Toward Peace Agenda, *Global Research*, April 17, 2018)

During the global cold war period, 1950-1990, North Korea was under constant American nuclear threat, but during this period, it could rely on the Soviet Union for its security.

But, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Pyongyang stood alone to face the American nuclear attack threats supported by the South Korean army. This has forced North Korea to try to develop nuclear weapons to defend itself from the attack.

In the mean time, from 1990 to 2018, Pyongyang had to live under fear, insecurity and poverty because of annual U.S.-South Korean military exercises and, in particular, economic, financial and personal sanctions.

In short, the cold war, whether it was the global or bilateral, has been and is unbearable cost imposed on Pyongyang

If there were any benefits at all of the cold war for North Korea, they could be the strong social solidarity and lasting bond between the leader and the people, which resulted from the natural instinct of uniting to cope with the major common danger.

Thus, the cold war has been nothing but pure suffering and cost as far as North Korea is concerned.

In one word, because of this high cost, North Korea has been longing for dialogues and peace with Seoul-Washington; it has been dreaming for becoming a “normal nation” where the ordinary people can lead “normal life”..

North Korean efforts to find peace with Washington and Seoul produced the Frame Agreement in 1994 and the September 19 Agreement of 2005, but both ended up as being an illusion; Washington did not fully cooperate.

Having lost the chances of dialogue with Washington, Pyongyang has found it necessary to go for nuclear deterrent.

North Korea has made clear that the development of nuclear program was for purely

defensive purpose and not for offensive intention.

The dying message of Kim Il-sung, founder of North Korea, to his son, Kim Jong-il was to avoid nuclear program.

Kim Jong-il told Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi during a meeting in Pyongyang on May 22, 2004 that North Korea was forced to have nuclear weapons to defend against American threat.

“Nobody can keep silent, if threatened by someone with a stick. We come to have nuclear weapons for the sake of the right of existence. If our existence is secured, nuclear weapons will not be necessary any more”.

The North Korean foreign minister made the same statement on October 11, 2006, two days after Pyongyang’s first nuclear test.

“The nuclear test was entirely attributable to U.S. nuclear threat, sanctions and pressure. North Korea was compelled to substantially improve its possession of nuclear arms to protect its sovereignty”.

Kim Jong-un has been repeating the same appeal in his recent new-year speeches.

The Conservatives of South Korea

The bilateral cold war was very beneficial to the conservatives of South Korea

The conservatives ruled South Korea for 60years (1947-1987 and 2008-2017) out of its 70-year post-Pacific War era. (Professor Joseph H. Chung: Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula: A Blessing for South Korean People, *Global Research* June 5, 2018)

The conservatives in South Korea benefited from the cold war in two main ways.

First, they won major elections including presidential elections owing to the environment of fear of North Korean attacks often artificially fabricated for election purposes. In South Korea, this phenomenon is known as “the power of Northern Wind”.

Second, the North-South friction created by the cold war has meant huge amounts of imports of American military equipment; Seoul spends lately almost US \$10 billion a year. It is a well know fact that the transaction of military equipment can easily generate bribes, illegal kickbacks and other means of corruption because of the legal secrecy of military spending.

The liberal progressive government of Moon Jae-in is now investigating so called the “Corruption of National Defence Industry” (bang-san-bi-ri)



President Donald J. Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sign a joint statement | June 12, 2018
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

As far as the conservatives of South Korea are concerned, the cold war has been very beneficial. Hence, they would not welcome the current peace process; it is possible that they would not welcome the Singapore Statement signed by Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump.

The U.S.

The bilateral cold war in the Korean peninsula has been even more beneficial to the U.S. than what it has been for the South Korean conservatives.

The U.S. has been enjoying the following types of benefits: provision of means of China surveillance and containment strategy, sale of expensive American military equipment and even possible benefits coming from corruption related to the export of American weapons to South Korea.

Washington keeps no less than 27,500 GIs in South Korea. Washington argues that it is necessary to deploy them in South Korea in order to protect South Korea from attacks from the North.

True, this argument could have some sense during the global cold war, but since the 1990s, North Korea had neither the intention of making total war with the South nor the capacity to do so.

Besides, South Korea can protect itself from the North Korean aggression as long as Pyongyang does not use nuclear weapons. And Pyongyang would never use such dirty bombs, because if it does so, it will be its funeral.

Furthermore, we should remember one thing; South Korea spends each year no less than US \$40 billion for national defence as against US \$ 4 billion by North Korea. And, this gap has been cumulating for decades.

The more important reason for deploying the impressive number of American soldiers with awesome fire power in South Korea is the surveillance and the containment of China.

One of the most persistent elements of Washington's foreign policy has been the prevention of the emergence of countries capable of challenging the absolute supremacy of the U.S.

Washington's vision of world order has been always the uni-polar order; it has never accepted a multi-polar order.

One thing certain is that the cold war in the Korean peninsula has provided important benefit of strengthening Washington's capacity to prevent China from becoming equal to the U.S. This is, perhaps, the most important benefit as far as Uncle Sam is concerned.

The cold war in the Korean peninsula has surely provided good reasons to inflate the national defence budget of the U.S.

It is not easy to know how bad the corruption related to the transactions of weapons is in Washington, but, in the case of South Korea, it could generate billions of dollars through corrupted weapon transactions.

The corrupted money is shared by members of the oligarchy composed of politicians, financiers, military leaders, weapon producers and even research institutes

It is quite possible that a similar situation is found in the United States.

In short, the Korean cold war could have given triple benefits to Washington including the strategic means of anti-China policy, the expansion of the national defence budget and enrichment of the oligarchy.

On the other hand, the cold war involves some cost which Washington must pay; the cost includes the cost of keeping GIs in South Korea and that of annual joint military drills.

However, one thing certain is that the benefit which the U.S. gets from the Korean cold war must be greater than the cost, much greater, perhaps.

The implication is obvious; hardliners in Washington have no interest to end the cold war.

In fact, Washington's North Korean policy has been one of maintaining the cold war. In other words, the logical North Korean policy of Washington would be one of intensifying the North-South tension.

Now, the North-South tension has been kept and intensified through the following means.

First, North Korea is demonized through various means including the accusation for the violation of human right, government's failure of feeding its people, lack of freedom of speech and much publicized open execution of political dissidents.

Second, annual Washington-Seoul joint military drills forced Pyongyang to arm itself; it is a sure way of aggravating the North-South friction and animosity

Third, the U.S. often cancelled agreements already signed with North Korea.

This happened in 1994 and 2005.

In 1994, the U.S. led-KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) failed to provide aid for the construction of Light Water reactors; the U.S. failed to supply promised oil in return of Pyongyang's abandoning its nuclear programs.

In 2005, alleged money laundry of US\$25 million deposited by Pyongyang at the Banco Delta Asia in Macao was one of the excuses to kill the agreement of September 19 of 2005.

This tactic has gravely reduced Pyongyang's trust in Washington's integrity and North Korea felt the need to develop effective means to defend itself.

Fourth, the series of UN sanctions, in addition to Washington's own, against North Korea have been the most severe punishment of a sovereign people.

In fact, it is hard to understand how North Korean people have survived under such suffering; it is a mystery.

These sanctions have dangerously intensified the cold war in the Korean peninsula.

Fifth, another regular menu of Washington's anti-North Korea propaganda is the theory that North Korea is a threat to the U.S. and the East Asian region.

There is something wrong in this doctrine.

No country in the East Asia region has reported being threatened by North Korea.

What is more important is that North Korea never says that it would attack the U.S. territory; it says that it would attack the U.S., if, only if the U.S. attacks North Korea first.

In other words, it would be the American attack against North Korea that would make Pyongyang to attack the American territory.

Thus, the real threat against the American territory comes from Washington not from Pyongyang.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that North Korea attacks the U.S. territory.

But, let us be honest about it. The U.S. surely has the capacity to destroy Kim Jong-un's ICBMs carrying nuclear warhead, before they hit the U.S. territory.

If not, we have to ask what happened to US\$700 billion allocated each year to national defence.

All these tactics and strategies have one objective; it is to perpetuate the cold war in the Korean peninsula so that the presence of U.S troops in South Korea can be justified and the oligarchy can continue to have their benefits.

The Kim-Trump Summit: Unexpected Historical Opportunities

The ultimate objective of this summit is to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and install lasting peace in the Korean peninsula.

But, this is against the traditional Washington's North Korean policy!

If it is so, how does the Singapore summit become possible?

I think that the following factors are responsible for it.

First, for Washington, the value of U.S. friendly North Korea could be greater than hostile North Korea. Here, Trump might have thought that, as the Beijing-Washington rivalry is getting worse, Washington-friendly North Korea can be used as an element of the anti-China policy.

Second, Washington had been telling American people for so long about the danger of North Korea; the launching of Hwasung-15 on November 29, 2018 might have really scared them so much so that Trump had to do something; he had to choose between war and peace. Trump has wisely chosen peace, so it seems.

Third, the impeachment of Park Geun-hye and the birth of the liberal progressive government of Moon Jae-in in South Korea made it more difficult for the hawks in Washington to think of attacking Pyongyang.

Moon said unequivocally that he would never tolerate another war in the Korean peninsula. U.S. attack of North Korea could mean the end of Seoul-Washington alliance and this would weaken the efficiency of Uncle Sam's anti-China policy.

If Park Geun-hye were sitting in the Blue House at the time of the launching of Hwasung-15, Washington – Seoul could have made the Pyongyang's nose bleed.

Fourth, three strong global leaders made simultaneous historic appearance. They are Kim Jong-un, Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump. These leaders have shared the same vision of peace for the Korean peninsula, may be, for different reasons



Fifth, the PyungChang Olympics and other events have provided a extraordinary diplomatic stages where the three leaders could play their given role.

Let me say something about the character of the three leaders and their performance on the timely political and diplomatic stages.

Kim Jong-un was born into the royal family of Kim dynasty, but owing to his mother's wisdom, he was educated as an ordinary child. During his stay in Swiss, he was presented as the son of a diplomat and treated as such.

This has led him to see the world through the eyes of ordinary people and identify himself to the values cherished by the ordinary people including freedom, justice and equality. This might have led him to undertake the transformation of the North Korean society into a "normal society".

This is why he wanted to go from "Byungjin" (simultaneous development of nuclear defence and economic development) to the priority given to economic development.

It goes without saying that, to do so, North Korea must be open to the outside world and try dialogues with Washington.

Coming to Trump, he is very different from other American presidents.

First, he is not a trained politician; he may have different perception of the success or the failure of government policies. He may value more visible and tangible benefits of American foreign policies rather than Washington's international influence or prestige

It is possible that he has little political debt; he is relatively free to conceive and apply policies without being constrained by established vested interest groups.

This may have allowed him to envisage even foreign policy which is very different from previous ones.

Second, the success of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula may allow him to improve his image as bold American president.

Third, if the peace process is successful, he can be proud himself as being someone who has written the last pages of the cold war

Finally, he is a very autonomous man; he decides and he goes "My Way". This might have allowed him to go against Bolton-Pence doctrine of Libya solution of Korean nuclear crisis.

Moon Jae-in is one of the rare breeds of South Korean politicians.

He has been always a fighter for social justice; he has a very strong root in North Korea; he is one of the most convincing nationalist.

He believes that the reunification of the two Koreas is the unique way of ensuring the survival and sustained development of the Korean peninsula in the Sino-U.S. Thucydides trap.

Above all, Kim Jong-un trusts Moon, who was the chief of cabinet for President Rho Moo-hyun's government during the period, 2003-2008.

President Rho is the most popular South Korean political leader in North Korea.

It just happened that these three stars emerged almost simultaneously as key leaders who could play decisive role for the solution of the 28-year-old Korean cold war.

The PyungChang Olympics came and provided a political and diplomatic stage on which the three stars could play their respective role.

The performance of the three stars on the stage has produced the following results.

First, Trump made it clear, through his vice-president, that a complete denuclearization is the ultimate bottom line of peace talk.

This might have calmed the hardliners in the U.S. and American people.

Second, Kim Jong-un was successful in showing- through the remarkable performance of his singers and dancers- that North Koreans were not all demons; they were humans like all of us.

This might have given the world the impression that one can have logical and sensible conversation with North Koreans.

Third, Moon Jae-in worked very hard to prove that he could speak both Pyongyang language and Washington language.

This might have facilitated the Washington-Pyongyang dialogue.

Another event came along.

On the 27th of April 2018, Kim and Moon shook hands; this handshake shook the world.

Kim's trust in Moon would have made Kim to promise complete denuclearization of North Korea, of course, under some conditions.

One more event came along. On May 26, 2018, Moon Jae-in met with Kim Jong-un in Panmunjom to confirm once again Pyongyang's commitment to complete denuclearization.

Moon might have told Trump, before the Singapore summit, about Kim's firm commitment to complete denuclearization.

This could have led Trump to change his mind and go to Singapore.

Remember that Trump cancelled the Singapore summit on June 24.

Thus, the way to the Singapore summit was open.

So, Kim and Trump shook hands early in the morning of June 12, 2018 and, in the afternoon, the two signed a joint statement; Trump said the meeting was big success.

And each of the three stars did get rewards.

Trump might have done something nobody has ever done. He may have closed the last pages of the cold war history. The world hopes so

He may get the Peace Nobel along with Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in; he may get even some good results at the mid-term election in coming November.

Kim Jong-un, became a respectable global leader; he made it sure that North Korea could

become a peaceful country; the summit might have tightened his position as absolute leader in Pyongyang.

Above all, he has become a respectable and reliable global leader and diplomat partly owing to Trump's very positive remarks about him.

As for Moon Jae-in, the Singapore drama made him a very tall man; he got precious praise from Bill Clinton, former president of the U.S., as respectable world leader (Yonhap News, June 8).

He made both Kim and Trump to rely on him for honest and trustworthy communication between Pyongyang and Washington; this is vital for the successful denuclearization and the assurance of a bright future for the people living in north of the DMZ.

He surely increased the probability of the reunification of Korea.

Here we are. We are all excited about the outcome of the Singapore handshake.

But will the peace process be successful?

Already, experts not only in the U.S. but also, especially, the conservative experts in South Korea are critical of the Kim-Trump summit in general and their joint statement, in particular.

The most widespread beef is about the absence of CVID (complete verifiable irreversible denuclearization) in the joint statement. But this criticism is irresponsible.

To begin with, this is a concept invented in the 1990s by a hardliner in Washington and has not been internationally accepted; it is just too abstract to apply.

Now, the part "I" standing for "irreversible" could mean anything. The most troubling implication is the period of irreversibility. Is it for the life of the country? Would there be any sensible country which accepts such impossible condition?

Those who sell this idea of CVID could be those who are against denuclearization and peace in the Korean peninsula.

In other words, this is the argument of warmongering hardliners in Washington and some conservatives in Seoul; they seem to prefer the continuation of the cold war.

If "I" means that Kim Jong-un cannot come back to nuclear business which has been once abandoned, it could happen when the basic infrastructure of the whole nuclear program will be dismantled; at this point, it will be too costly to come back.

This may be what Trump had in mind when he mentioned 20%; it may mean that when the 20% of the denuclearization process is attained, the "irreversibility" applies.

The third item of the Joint Statement says this.

"Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula".

Here, "Complete" can include both "V" and "I". To complete denuclearization, one must go

through verification (V) and once the process of denuclearization hits a certain level, it becomes just too costly to resume (I) the nuclear program.

So, what is relevant is CD (complete denuclearization) as mentioned in the Kim-Moon Joint Declaration-4.27.

In short, the Singapore Joint Statement has provided the workable general framework of the peace process.

It is possible that the joint statement is not perfect. But it has provided a framework wide enough to allow flexible and effective negotiations.

But, let us not forget one thing; it is the first get-together of two individuals representing two nations that have been enemies for seventy years.

The final success of the peace process depends essentially on the width and the depth of the coming negotiations and the timing of execution of the agreements.

Above all, the mutual trust is a must; both Pyongyang and Washington should believe what the other side says as facts, otherwise, agreements would become near impossible.

North Korea has already shown its commitment and sincere desire to realize denuclearization.

Kim Jong-un has already dismantled the five nuclear test sites; he will soon dismantle some of missile launch site.

Washington has shown the first sign of its good will; it announced the suspension of the Unlchi-Freedom Guardian Joint military drill which had originally been scheduled for coming August.

All these happenings seem to suggest then that the peace process might go well, but there could be many hurdles to go over before peace smiles in the Korea peninsula and North Korea becomes a “normal country”.

To conclude, I may say this.

The Washington-Pyongyang Summit could have happened before, if the U.S wanted to do so.

Now, the Singapore Summit could fail because of the deliberate and effective objections, intrigues and lies by the hardliners in Washington and elsewhere; in this case, we may need another Singapore Summit later

Professor Michel Chossudovsky warns about the possibility of failure of the peace process based on the Singapore summit agreements. (Aftermath of the Trump-Kim Summit, Unilateral, Denuclearization, Continued Military Threat, Economic Sanctions, *Global Research*, June 17, 2018)

What the world needs is to be vigilant and be united in its concerted efforts to end, once for all, the ugly cold war.

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Professor Joseph H. Chung is currently associated professor of economics and co-director of the Observatory of East Asia (OAE) of the Study Center for Integration and Globalization (CEIM), Quebec University-Montreal Campus (UQAM). He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization.

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