

Trump/Kim Meeting Shows Value of Policy over Politics

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Featured image: President Donald J. Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, walk together to their one-on-one bilateral meeting, Tuesday, June 12, 2018, at the Capella Hotel in Singapore. (Official White House Photo by Stephanie Chasz)

When President Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, on October 11, 1987, it helped put into motion events that would dramatically change the global system. A line of communication was fully opened with an enemy of decades and substantive issues were on the table. Though the summit was initially reported as a failure, with the two sides unable to sign a final agreement, history now shows us that it was actually a great success that paved the way to the eventual end of the Cold War and a reduction in the threat of a nuclear war.

A year later Gorbachev and Reagan met in Washington to continue the dialogue that had been started and the rest is history. Success began as a “failure.”

We are now facing a similar situation with President Trump’s historic meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore. As with the Reagan/Gorbachev meetings, detractors on all sides seem determined to undermine and belittle the opening of a door to diplomacy and peace.

The neocons demand that North Korea give up all its bargaining chips up front in return for vague promises of better relations with the US. Yet in the post-Libya era no serious person would jump at such an offer. Their biggest fear is that peace may break out and they are doing everything to prevent that from happening. Conflict is their livelihood.

I also find it disheartening that many Democrat opponents of President Trump who rightly cheered President Obama’s efforts to reach a deal with Iran are now condemning Trump for opening the door to diplomacy with North Korea. Did they genuinely support President Obama’s diplomatic efforts with Iran, or did they just prefer the person who happened to occupy the Oval Office at the time?

The issue is about policy versus politics and I am afraid too many Americans of all political stripes are confusing the two. Many Americans, it seems, would prefer that we continue down the path to a potentially nuclear conflict on the Korean peninsula because they do not like the current US president. Does that make any sense? Has politics come to over-rule our common sense to the point we would go against our own interests and even our own lives? Let’s hope not!

The truth is, talking is always better than threatening. Just like trading is always better than sanctioning. Detractors on both sides miss the point while they desperately try to make political points. The current thaw with North Korea began with that country's participation in the Olympic games in South Korea. From that point, North and South Korea came to see each other as neighbors rather than enemies. That process will continue regardless of what comes from the Trump/Kim summit and it is a process we should cheer.

Hopefully this historic Trump/Kim meeting is the beginning of a dialogue that will continue to dial back the tensions. Hopefully we can soon remove the 30,000 US troops that have been stationed in South Korea for seven decades. One thing Washington must do, however: stay out of the way as much as possible so as to allow the two Koreas to continue their peace process.

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