

# Second summit between Trump and Kim collapses with no agreement

**Ben McGrath**  
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United States President Donald Trump and North Korea Chairman Kim Jong-un held their second summit in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi on Wednesday and Thursday. Talks collapsed on the second day with the two sides failing to produce any tangible results, highlighting the ongoing danger of a US-instigated war on the Korean Peninsula.

Washington and Pyongyang disputed the reason for the summit's abrupt ending. Trump claimed that the North agreed to dismantle its nuclear enrichment facilities at Yongbyon only if all sanctions were lifted. He stated, "They were willing to denuke a large portion of the areas that we wanted, but we couldn't give up all of the sanctions for that...We had to walk away from that." The US demanded that other aspects of Pyongyang's weapon programs be dismantled before any lifting of sanctions.

North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho disputed this account at a Friday press conference, saying, "If the United States removes partial sanctions, mainly removes the articles of sanctions that hamper the civilian economy and the livelihood of our people in particular, we will permanently and completely dismantle all the nuclear material production facilities at Yongbyon, including plutonium and uranium, in the presence of US experts."

Ri added that Pyongyang would put in writing a pledge to permanently halt nuclear and long-range missile testing, but added, "Given the current level of trust between North Korea and the United States, this was the maximum step for denuclearization we could offer."

Prior to the summit, Washington hinted it could ease demands for "complete, verifiable, and irreversible" denuclearization before lifting any sanctions. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on February 21, "We won't

release that pressure (from sanctions) until such time as we're confident we've substantially reduced that risk (from North Korea)."

Despite the summit's failure, Pompeo stated that he was still optimistic about negotiations in the near future, claiming they had not come to an end. In addition, South Korea stated that Trump spoke via phone to President Moon Jae-in after leaving Hanoi, asking Moon "to actively perform the role of a mediator" between Washington and Pyongyang.

Negotiations came only as a result of Washington's provocative and bellicose threats, made explicit by Trump in 2017 to "totally destroy" the North. Pyongyang is well aware that any deal it reaches to give up its nuclear program could still end in regime-change operations, as Washington has a long history of abrogating agreements it no longer finds politically useful.

The reality is that North Korea's nuclear and weapon programs, as well as issues over human rights, have served as pretexts for Washington to place economic and military pressure on Pyongyang and ultimately force the Stalinist regime into the US orbit. This process, beginning after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, accelerated in recent years as part of the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" and the Trump administration's even more dangerous preparations for war against China.

In this regard, whether or not Pyongyang maintains some degree of weaponry or continues to suppress the democratic rights of North Korean workers and farmers is of little importance to Washington so long as Pyongyang can be counted as an ally in the war drive against Beijing.

This was a major reason for the holding of the summit in Vietnam, with Trump tweeting a day before

the summit, “Vietnam is thriving like few places on earth. North Korea would be the same, and very quickly, if it would denuclearize. The potential is AWESOME, a great opportunity, like almost none other in history, for my friend Kim Jong Un. We will know fairly soon - Very Interesting!”

What of course goes unmentioned is that Vietnam, after decades of war against French and US imperialism, used the restoration of capitalism in the 1980s to offer up its working class as a source of cheap labor in the interest of international capital. The Stalinist regime enriched itself while policing its workers and farmers to prevent any opposition to this exploitation. In addition, Vietnam has become an integral part of Washington’s war plans in the region, as military cooperation between the two continues to grow.

The Stalinists in Pyongyang hope to replicate this turn in order to increase their own wealth at the expense of the North Korean working class, but are uneasy about the strain it would place on relations with China, the North’s largest and only significant economic backer. Behind the scenes, the Trump administration is undoubtedly pressing for Pyongyang to “flip” militarily, though historically it has maintained better relations with Beijing than Hanoi has. It is this that lies at the heart of Trump’s engagement with Pyongyang and in fact underlines US policy in the Asia-Pacific.

Whatever the immediate outcome of the summit and future negotiations, the world is increasingly resembling the period before the outbreak of World War II, with its sudden and rapid shifts in alliances between countries. The broader context, however, is the rapidly intensifying preparations by the United States for military conflict with its “great power” rivals, Russia and China.



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