



2018 HanVoice Conference Report:

What you need to know
for the Kim-Trump meeting,
and what's at stake

Executive Summary

On May 9, 2018, HanVoice held a panel discussion on the impending Kim-Trump meeting, inviting a broad range of speakers, including a North Korean defector, a South Korean official, and two local experts residing in Canada.

1. Audrey Park, a North Korean defector and alumna of the HanVoice Pioneer Project, shared optimistic views of the summit, but voiced concerns for defector safety and involuntary repatriation. She also noted the absence of refugee and human rights issues from summit discourse.
2. Moojin Ha, HanVoice visiting scholar and a South Korean government official, spoke about the marked differences of past North-South summits with the most recent Moon-Kim meeting, the recent which emphasized denuclearization and apparent concessions from the North. He argued, however, that it also *resembled* past meetings in that Kim's known demands were largely the same and that his promises were comprised of words without show of substantive action. Moojin added that challenges lay ahead, such as the difficulty of achieving Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement. He concluded by emphasizing that we cannot give Kim room to renege on the deal.
3. Panelists Jack Kim, HanVoice co-founder, and Steven Denney, UofT PhD candidate, agreed that recent UNSC sanctions represent an unprecedented degree of international consensus. They added that America's institutionalization of sanctions and its Maximum Pressure Campaign have been "game changer[s]", but nonetheless maintained that sanctions are insufficient for peace. Jack pondered whether the upcoming meeting may be a stalling tactic for the North, and agreed with Steven that Kim will want security guarantees from potential peace agreements. In addressing America's role, Steven argued that Trump's behaviour may be driven by hubris and a desire for legacy, and added that a summit failure may give voice to conservative hawks who support military intervention. The panelists addressed such military options and their costly ramifications. Both agreed that diplomatic options such as sanctions have been effective in bringing Kim to the table. Steven emphasized the importance of perceiving the upcoming meeting as *step one*, rather than the *all-or-nothing, last-ditch* opportunity for peace.
4. The panelists' suggestions for Canadian action included advocating for a private refugee sponsorship program to MPs, donating USBs to distribute information, staying informed, and keeping North Korea's 99% in mind.

1. Bring a Defectors' Perspective: Audrey Park

Audrey Park, a North Korean defector and alumna of the HanVoice Pioneer Project, began the conference by giving a North Korean defector's perspective on the developments on the Korean peninsula, including the Moon-Kim meeting and the upcoming Kim-Trump meeting, now set for June 12th in Singapore. Audrey noted that her presentation was representative not only of her own personal views, but also those of many other defectors she had spoken to.

Audrey stated that many defectors are happy with the peaceful developments on the Korean peninsula. Many believe that peace is the better way for South Korea to deal with the North. Some North Korean defectors living in South Korea are hopeful that peace could allow them to go back home and visit their hometowns and families. Some believe that the lifting of international sanctions could open up the North Korean economy to trade—which would give defectors an ability to do business there.

However, there are also major concerns amongst the North Korean defector community in South Korea. In particular, some are worried about being sent back to North Korea, repatriated against their will. If the US, North Korea and China agree to replace the current armistice with a peace treaty, North-South relations could be normalized. If this occurs, defectors are worried that Kim Jong-un may ask Seoul to send them back, arguing that they are North Korean nationals. Some defectors are concerned that they will become a subject in the negotiations, either between Washington and Pyongyang or later with Seoul. Audrey noted that this concern, while not necessarily held by the majority of defectors, reflects the trauma that defectors have faced.

Audrey noted that defectors were left out of the Panmunjeom Declaration, including both those in South Korea and those in transit countries, such as Thailand. She opined that the South Korean government may not have wanted to upset Kim Jong-un in the delicate summit talks by bringing up the issue, or other human rights issues.

2. An Opinion Based on Experience: Moojin Ha

Moojin Ha, a visiting scholar at HanVoice and a Korean government official, brought his years of experience working on inter-Korean issues to the conference. Moojin worked extensively on security and inter-Korean cooperation measures, both at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Unification.

Moojin discussed four main reasons why the Kim-Trump summit was set.

1. The Moon Administration's pro-engagement policy with North Korea.
2. President Trump made the decision abruptly to meet with Kim once North Korea offered; if it had gone through layers of bureaucracy, the decision might have been different.

3. North Korea's nuclear program is ready and they need economic development, including through foreign direct investment; as Moojin aptly put it, "It's time to sell its nuclear program at [the] highest price in history."
4. Sanctions played a role in getting Kim to the table; however, Moojin cautioned that sanctions alone are not sufficient, and do not tell the whole story.

The recent Moon-Kim summit was historic, only the third in history (the others being in 2000 and 2007). There were some key differences (and similarities) between this 2018 summit and the previous ones. This time, the North Korean leader mentioned denuclearization *in his own words*. Furthermore, Kim Jong-un seemed ready to recognize South Korea as part of the peace process, whereas in the past, North Korea viewed the matter as a solely US-North Korean issue, rather than inter-Korean affairs. Kim has even accepted the US-South Korea joint military drills, and seems open to the US Forces Korea (USFK) staying on the peninsula after a peace treaty is signed. Even before the Moon-Kim summit, Pyongyang was making pre-emptive moves, such as stopping the missile tests.

To highlight the similarities between this Moon-Kim summit and others, Moojin noted that Pyongyang's promises remain oral, and not reflected in action. Their known demands, furthermore, are *largely* the same as in the past.

Moojin warned that there are many challenges ahead. Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID) of Kim's nuclear program (America's ultimate goal) will be very difficult, perhaps impossible. Reaching a bargain may be hindered by both sides mutually hedging their bets attempting to minimize loss, due to lack of trust. Furthermore, there is uncertainty whether political opposition in the US and South Korea could kill a deal, either in its formation or later on.

Moojin concluded on a cautionary note, reminding us that North Korea has walked from previous deals, always with an excuse. This time, we cannot give Kim Jong-un any room for excuses.

3. Panel Debate: Hawks vs. Doves

The remainder of the conference was presented as a debate between hawks and doves, with HanVoice co-founder and board member Jack Kim representing the hawks (favouring aggressive foreign policy), and University of Toronto PhD candidate Steven Denney representing the doves (favouring resolution without force). In foreign policy circles, hawks are seen as more security and military-oriented, whereas doves are more diplomacy and engagement-oriented. It is important to note that the arguments put forth by the participants were not necessarily their own, but merely meant to illustrate the ongoing debate among North Korea observers.

The Nuclear Threat

The panel started out from the premise that North Korea represents a threat to the entire world. It is not just North Korea's nuclear program that threatens its neighbours and even the mainland US, but also its conventional, non-nuclear missile program.

Sanctions

The panel discussed sanctions on North Korea, which have ramped up since 2006. There are both international sanctions (through the UN Security Council) and unilateral ones imposed by various states, including the US and Japan. The fact that the UNSC has been able to apply sanctions (and increasingly strong ones) means that there is, to some degree, international consensus around North Korea – even its closest ally, China, seems to have acknowledged that the situation has gotten out of hand, as China did not exercise its veto power. Furthermore, in the US, Congress passed a law in 2016 mandating the president to update sanctions annually; this institutionalized sanctions for the first time, where previously they had been ad hoc.

The recent policy of the US and its allies has been dubbed the Maximum Pressure Campaign. Part of this has been targeting North Korea's key exports and imports, including unprocessed raw materials like coal, as well as textiles. This round of sanctions also included targeting Chinese banks, which was a game-changer, since 90% of North Korea's trade is with China.

The conclusion of the panel was that sanctions were and are necessary, but not sufficient to force Kim Jong-un to seek and establish peace on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's Intentions

The hawks believe the summit is just a stalling tactic by Kim Jong-un; like in negotiations past, they are buying time to further develop their weapons program. Despite media coverage seemingly declaring the missile and nuclear program complete, the regime still has a lot of room to develop it, including with stronger bombs and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles.

North Korea will want a security guarantee. A Gaddafi-model nuclear deal may concern Pyongyang, since the former Libyan leader agreed to suspend his nuclear program, and was subsequently ousted by the US and allies.

China's Intentions

The panel discussed China's intentions and interests in the Kim-Trump summit. The panel noted that if China wanted the North Korean regime to fall, it would have pulled the plug. The hawks believe that the Chinese keep North Korea around because it serves their interest, distracting the US while China expands its influence in Asia. For China, it's a long-term game -- a 10 to 20 year plan.

The panel noted that China has high-speed railways that reach the North Korean border. There are two potential reasons: first, China wants to be able to get into North Korea quickly in case of an emergency; second, it wants North Korea to be prosperous and stable, capable of doing business after normalization. These questions remain unknown to all but the Chinese government.

Trump's Intentions

The panel was divided on Donald Trump's intentions for the Kim meeting. Every recent American president has rejected the idea of a one-on-one summit, fearing it would legitimize the regime by putting the Kim dynasty on equal footing with the US presidency.

The doves noted that Trump has a lot of hubris, and that he may be going for a legacy at all costs. He has already begun shaking things up on the Korean Peninsula, including with hints he may remove US troops and he has already forced renegotiations of the KORUS FTA.

Donald Trump must be separated from the US Republican security establishment, which is much more hawkish. To the Republican party, security is paramount. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) has already called for military action against North Korea, saying that the US should strike before it develops full nuclear strike capabilities. A concern with a failed Kim-Trump summit is that it will give voice to those who see military force as the only remaining option.

The Options

Military Options

There are three main military options available to the US and its allies.

- 1) The so-called *bloody-nose strategy* by delivering a limited strike to make the regime will back down.
- 2) A larger-scale series of strikes from the air.
- 3) A ground invasion, both through the DMZ and on the coasts.

Would they actually bomb North Korea though? One panelist noted that they came very close in 1994; but former US president Jimmy Carter brokered peace.

The ultimate concern is about North Korea's reaction to any use of military force by the American government. If the Americans are striking, Kim Jong-un will not know if it is a *bloody nose strategy* or a *decapitation strategy*. Kim may decide to launch his nuclear weapons before losing them, causing mass devastation.

Diplomatic Options

The current US policy of Maximum Pressure has been effective in getting Kim to the table. The US also instituted a travel ban after the Otto Warmbier incident. The US Treasury has been targeting banks - including Chinese banks - that do business there. The US has created a clear dichotomy, in that you either do business with America or you do business with North Korea.

The Moon Administration has also been masterful in its handling of North Korea and the US-South Korea alliance. Moon is not only different from the two previous conservative administrations that froze relations with North Korea, but he is also different from the

previous liberal administrations of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun. These administrations had unconditional engagement with North Korea, even when its leadership misbehaved. But parts of the South Korean public think this has failed, even arguing that the Sunshine Policy aid given to the North was then used to start the nuclear weapons program. At the time, President Moon was chief of staff to then-President Roh Moo-hyun. He has learned the lessons of past administrations. He knows that South Korean political culture is more hawkish than it was ten years ago.

Moon is not a total dove. For example, after the 2010 Cheonan ship sinking incident, President Lee Myung-bak initiated an embargo, but kept the Kaesong Industrial Complex open. President Park Geun-hye then closed that. Moon has not re-opened it or lifted the embargo. He maintains some more hawkish policies, perhaps reflecting public sentiment.

The main concern of the doves' argument is that the Kim-Trump summit will be seen as the last opportunity for a peaceful resolution of the tensions on the Korean Peninsula. It must be viewed instead as the first step to negotiation, not an all-or-nothing strategy. If total peace is the standard for bilateral success, then the summit will fail.

4. What can Canadians do?

The panel discussed opportunities for Canadians to help with the situation. These included donating USBs packed with information to help give the North Korean people a glimpse of the outside world, as well as advocating to members of parliament for a private sponsoring program, which would allow Canadians to sponsor North Korean refugees. Lastly, the panel noted that it was important to *be informed* and not to forget the 99%, those North Korean citizens who are suffering and who are paid no attention by the global media.

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