

A brief history of DPRK's nuclear weapons

Prologue: The US need to act now to take advantage of the 2018 Trump-Kim Singapore Joint Statement

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On April 30 2021, the press secretary Jen Psaki announced that the administration officials had completed a review of U.S. policy toward North Korea. Psaki did not detail findings of the review, but suggested the administration would seek a middle ground between Trump's "grand bargain" and Obama's "strategic patience" approaches. Three weeks later on May 21, there was a big news that President Biden *reaffirmed* 2018 Trump-Kim Singapore Joint Statement, as well as Panmunjom Declaration (Moon-Kim). This was a big news because the Singapore Joint Statement could be an indispensable asset for the future confidence building in the Northeast Asia. Reaffirmation of the Joint Statement means Biden administration is taking a comprehensive approach, not only focused on the DPRK's nuclear weapons and missile testing, but the US to give security assurance¹, and sharing a goal of lasting and stable peace on the Korean Peninsula². However, the newly appointed US special envoy to DPRK Sung Kim has been offering a meeting "anywhere, anytime" to Pyongyang, that means starting negotiation with DPRK officials without conditions. Jen Psaki repeatedly used the same expression, as if the next move must come from DPRK answering this call. But what is needed at this point is the US confidence building actions to start resumed communication with the DPRK. It seems the potentials of the Singapore Joint Statement is not widely understood by the current White House decision makers. According to the detailed study of the history resulted to the Joint Statement and the actions taken by both parties, it is clear that the next move must come from the US, not from DPRK. Here is why.

Now, let's look back on the year 2018 when two summit meetings took place.

On April 20, Kim Jong Un announced a new direction at the Plenary Meeting of the Party's Central Committee, the decision-making body of the North Korea, by saying "orientate the overall party and state affairs into the socialist economic construction and put all efforts into it." He further announced the discontinuation of the nuclear testing and ICBM launching from the next day, and the demolition of the nuclear test site. On May 24th, Kim dismantled the test site by

¹ See original Singapore Joint Statement attached at the end, underlined second paragraph

² Same document, underlined number 2 headline

blowing up all the three tunnels, in front of the CNN and other foreign medias who were invited there.

At the Singapore meeting, Kim indicated to Trump that he would dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test facility as a proof of the cancelled ICBM tests. This promise was confirmed in the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration between north and south Korea on September 19, stating "the North will permanently dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site and launch platform under the observation of experts from relevant countries." In addition, North Korea returned 55 remains to the US, on the 25th anniversary of the ceasefire agreement on July 27, which was promised in the Singapore Joint Statement.

In the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, North Korea also stated that it was willing to respond to additional confidence-building measures, based on the action-to-action approach with the U.S. The additional action from DPRK would be permanently dismantling its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, if the United States takes appropriate measures in line with the spirit of the U.S.-North Korea Joint Statement. It is clear that North Korea has been actively showing its efforts to build trust along the line of the Singapore Joint Statement.

On the other hand, the U.S. action has been limited to postponing and reducing large-scale joint U.S.-South Korea military exercise. In light of this history, it will be clear that it is the US turn to take confidence-building actions to build a new U.S.-North Korea relationship as expressed in the Singapore Joint Statement.

We often came across with texts written by U.S. diplomats and experts who have worked for the U.S. State Department and have been involved in negotiations with North Korea. Many of them say in their texts that North Korea's negotiating partner is a proud and tough negotiator, but we never heard of their impression that DPRK negotiators are illogical or irrational. Many of us have, including the U.S. politicians, preconceived North Korean images; dictatorship, human rights suppression, and caricatured image of its leader. However, we must separate these elements with the negotiations of the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula along with sustainable peace in the Northeast Asia region. Promotion of the democracy and protecting human rights are very important agendas, but negotiation at hand is nuclear weapons free Korean Peninsula, and sustainable peace in the Northeast Asia. Achieving shared goal, stated in the 2018 Singapore Joint Statement, is the foundation of the step forward.

Turning over the oval office, President Obama said to President-elect Trump that DPRK situation is the toughest among the current foreign policy issues. Yes, the situation is tough because of the complex history, because of the memories of Japanese occupation in the Korean Peninsula, because of the fact Koreans are still divided by 38th parallel, and because of the geopolitical security situation of the Northeast Asia including US-China cold war. After four generations of the US Presidencies negotiated with the DPRK: Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, we believe Biden administration is facing a true break-through opportunity which is already laid out in the 2018 Singapore Joint Statement as a comprehensive approach.

Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit

Issued on: June 12, 2018

President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) held a first, historic summit in Singapore on June 12, 2018.

President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un conducted a comprehensive, in-depth, and sincere exchange of opinions on the issues related to the establishment of new U.S.–DPRK relations and the building of a lasting and robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. President Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK, and Chairman Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Convinced that the establishment of new U.S.–DPRK relations will contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Korean Peninsula and of the world, and recognizing that mutual confidence building can promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un state the following:

1. The United States and the DPRK commit to establish new U.S.–DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity.
2. The United States and the DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.
3. Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
4. The United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

Having acknowledged that the U.S.–DPRK summit—the first in history—was an epochal event of great significance in overcoming decades of tensions and hostilities between the two countries and for the opening up of a new future, President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un commit to implement the stipulations in this joint statement fully and expeditiously. The United States and the DPRK commit to hold follow-on negotiations, led by the U.S. Secretary of State,

Mike Pompeo, and a relevant high-level DPRK official, at the earliest possible date, to implement the outcomes of the U.S.–DPRK summit.

President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have committed to cooperate for the development of new U.S.–DPRK relations and for the promotion of peace, prosperity, and security of the Korean Peninsula and of the world.

DONALD J. TRUMP
President of the United States of America

KIM JONG UN
Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

June 12, 2018
Sentosa Island
Singapore