



Statement Before the

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International

Cybersecurity Policy

***“Next Steps on U.S. Policy Toward
North Korea”***

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Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Markey, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is a distinct honor to appear before this committee to discuss the challenges of U.S. policy to North Korea.

A historic moment?

The impending summit meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un on June 12 in Singapore potentially will take us to a historic moment in U.S. policy on the Korean peninsula. It could be historic for one of two reasons.

First, if the summit meets the high expectations that the President has set for the meeting, it could lead to a breakthrough agreement where North Korea, after over one half-century, finally makes the strategic decision to come in from the cold, part with their nuclear weaponry and ballistic missiles, and join the international community. In this scenario, the United States would assuage North Korea's insecurity, work with the international community to provide economic benefits to the regime, and end the Korean War with a peace agreement to replace the 1953 armistice. Japan would also normalize political relations with North Korea, achieving the long-sought "cross-recognition" of the great powers in East Asia with the two Koreas. This would be a historic, "fairy tale ending" to the Korean conflict and the platform for a new era of peace and prosperity in Asia.

Unfortunately, there are no fairy-tale endings with North Korea. The alternate historic outcome would be a failed meeting in Singapore where either or both leaders walk away convinced of the other's disingenuousness. In this scenario, negotiations break down, North Korea returns to its pattern of behavior in 2017 when it conducted 20 ballistic missile tests and one hydrogen bomb test, the United States ramps up military exercising and pre-positioning of assets, the "fire and fury" rhetoric heats up again, and the potential for armed conflict, even nuclear conflict, becomes very real.¹

The likely reality is that the summit will produce something in between these two extremes. The U.S. and North Korea teams have been preparing in Singapore (led by Joe Hagin [U.S.] and Kim Chang-son [DPRK]), Panmunjeom (led by Sung Kim [U.S.] and Choe Son-hui [DPRK]), and in Washington (Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Vice Chairman Kim Yong-chol), constituting the conventional preparations and choreographing of a summit that were initially absent when President Trump on March 8 impulsively agreed to meet the North Korean leader on the occasion of an Oval Office visit by the South Korean national security advisor Chung Eui-yong. After President Trump's 2-hour meeting with North Korea's second-in-command Kim Yong-chol on June 1, he stated that "it'll be a process. It's not – I never said it goes in one meeting...But relationships are building, and that's a very positive thing" in order to achieve denuclearization, which he believes Kim Jong-un would "like to see it happen."²

¹"North Korean Provocations and U.S.-ROK Military Exercises," *CSIS Beyond Parallel*, April 3, 2017, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/north-korean-provocations-us-rok-military-exercises/>

² Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump after Meeting with Vice Chairman Kim Yong Chol of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *The White House*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-meeting-vice-chairman-kim-yong-chol-democratic-peoples-republic-korea/>

The irony, then, is that what was initially presented as a cliff-hanger dramatic summit, upon which war or peace on the Korean peninsula hung is now looking more like conventional diplomacy for the unconventional Trump White House. There is nothing wrong with this. To have policy professionals working long hours to prepare logistics and deliverables in advance of the two leaders' meeting is ideally the way summit diplomacy should be conducted. And given the nature of North Korea, trying to close the gap on disparate definitions of denuclearization requires an early meeting with the regime since there is only one person in the North Korean system who can make such a strategic decision. If the President sees himself as successful in Singapore, he will have been able to elicit a definitive commitment from the North Korean leader to abandon his nuclear weapons, a commitment to end his ballistic missile threats to the U.S. and its allies, and mandate a negotiation process going forward to achieve lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. While this outcome would not be achieving the so-called "CVID" (complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement) along the lines of the Libya model, few would disagree that this would be a useful, albeit outcome. As Henry Kissinger once said, "foreign policy is the art of the possible and the science of the relative" – this summit outcome would certainly be better than the alternative.³

What North Korea Wants

Nevertheless, as we hurtle toward June 12, it is important to keep in mind that North Korea and other powers are not in this game to achieve American interests, but to seek maximum concessions from the Trump administration, while giving up as little as possible of their own equities. North Korea's true intentions are not known. However, its goal may be to reach a peace agreement with the United States and all of the economic benefits that it would bring from China and South Korea, among others, but that ultimately Pyongyang will part with some, not all of their weapons capacity. In the end, North Korea may want to be a full-fledged member of the international community. It may want peace on the peninsula and a political relationship with the United States that does not necessarily have to be cordial but accords them respect as a sovereign state. But it also may want to be accepted as a nuclear weapons state. To the extent that Pyongyang addresses denuclearization concerns, it may seek to engage in arms control negotiations with the United States to reduce mutual threat, but it will not give up all of its weapons; instead it will try to socialize the world into believing that these weapons are purely defensive in nature and unthreatening, that they are safely controlled, and that they are the prerogative of a responsible nuclear weapons state.

What We Want

If the events leading up to June 12 are any indication, only the President himself will determine what deal can be made -- however imperfect -- or whether no deal should be made with Kim Jong-un. But a summit is not a strategy, and a summit without a strategy is dangerous. We cannot put ourselves in a position of trading away important alliance equities and weakening sanctions and pressure in return for vague promises of denuclearization in the future. The United States needs to have clear focus on our objectives in this negotiation and must stay closely aligned with Congress and with our allies on achieving these objectives. In this regard, I enumerate some

³ Henry A. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), page 258.

strategic principles that account for U.S. equities in Asia as we enter this period of summit diplomacy.

National Security Principles

Maintain the goal of complete denuclearization of North Korea.

The United States must maintain that the objective of our negotiations is the complete end to North Korea's WMD and missile threat. Easing up on this goal might facilitate short-term negotiations, but would have damaging second and third order effects, regionally and globally. Any negotiations must prevent North Korea's use of these weapons to intimidate the region and, more broadly, to upholding the global nonproliferation regime. The modalities of this may be subject to negotiation, but not the goal.

In this regard, it will be important to see:

- 1) A definitive denuclearization statement from the North Korean leader, which commits to "abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs" (Six Party Talks 2005 joint statement commitment by North Korea) or returning to commitments in the 1992 Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula to neither harbor, develop, nor manufacture nuclear weapons, nuclear bomb precursors, enrichment facilities, and reprocessing capabilities;⁴
- 2) A complete and fully verifiable declaration of North Korea's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and ballistic missile programs.

Any negotiations and agreement with North Korea should make America more, not less, secure.

Progress in negotiations must not come at the cost of U.S. security in the short or long term. So long as North Korea's WMD and missile programs remain in existence, it will be important to maintain vigilant activities to prevent horizontal proliferation, including "maximum pressure" sanctions on those individuals and entities that continue to facilitate trade or business that finances these programs. The United States should also avoid negotiations that impact the military readiness of our forces to address the North Korean threat and broader regional challenges.

Pursue policies toward North Korea that facilitate broader U.S. strategic objectives in Asia.

U.S. North Korea policy must be embedded within a regional strategy that fortifies our leadership position and capacity to deal with challenges from a rising China. In practical terms, this means that measures we take in our North Korea policy should strengthen, not weaken, our alliances with South Korea and Japan. When negotiations with the North reach critical moments, we must

⁴ "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks," Beijing, September 19, 2005, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm>; "Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," February 19, 1992, <http://www.nti.org/media/pdfs/aptkoreanuc.pdf>

coordinate policies with our allies to enhance our deterrence and defense posture in the region. Any consideration of military options must also align with this principle.

Seek a missile drawdown that reinforces extended deterrence.

The United States has not tried to negotiate a missile drawdown by North Korea since the end of the Clinton administration. The failure to curb this program has resulted in the Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15 ICBMs that can directly threaten the U.S. homeland. However, any missile deal must account for the full range of North Korea's ballistic missiles – both short-range and long-range -- in a way that reinforces our extended deterrence commitments to allies and does not delink from Japan and South Korea.

Diplomacy Principles

Don't give away too much, too early.

One of Donald Trump's rules in business is never to want the negotiation more than your counterpart. Given the heightened expectations that have been heaped on the summit (and talk of the Nobel Peace Prize), it will be important for the President not to violate his own cardinal rule and put too many concessions on the table – e.g., the disposition of US troops in South Korea -- in return for vague commitments to denuclearization. Concessions must be calibrated to concrete actions by North Korea related to denuclearization or conventional force reductions, not just to promises.

Coordinate with Congress, allies, and partners.

Outcomes on the Korean peninsula impact the core interests of all the powers in East Asia. Donald Trump's "shock diplomacy" compelled regional players to find their feet and position themselves relative to the U.S. It will be important for Congress to insist on better coordination with relevant parties as the White House moves forward in these negotiations.

This includes:

- 1) Consulting with Congress given its role in funding or ratifying any agreement;
- 2) Ensuring the South Koreans coordinate their inter-Korean initiatives with the pace of U.S.- North Korea talks;
- 3) Protecting Japan's alliance equities;
- 4) Encouraging China and Russia not to work at cross-purposes with the U.S. effort. The process could also be derailed by clumsy communication: rather than loud tweets, quiet diplomacy and consultations are necessary.

Support a peace dialogue on the peninsula, with a treaty as a goal at the appropriate time in the future.

The United States should view an end to the state of hostilities on the peninsula as an objective fully in line with American interests. Toward this goal, a discussion among the relevant parties about how to implement confidence-building measures, crisis hotlines, West Sea crisis prevention, etc., is appropriate as denuclearization progresses.

Require North Korea to address human rights abuses.

Both parties appear to agree that this summit has the potential to start a broader political reconciliation process between the U.S. and North Korea. As a recent report by the George W. Bush Institute notes, a critical element of any comprehensive political settlement with North Korea must include their agreement to end the regime's systematic violations of human rights.⁵ Pyongyang's addressing of such concerns would lend credibility to the view that the regime has made a strategic decision to seek a path of integration with the international community.

Consider interim steps before achieving diplomatic normalization.

Realistically speaking, a one-shot denuclearization agreement is not likely to end a program that first started greenfield landscaping in 1962.⁶ This will take time and there will be many potholes and roadblocks along the way. Having an established channel of official diplomatic dialogue, such as liaison offices, might help the denuclearization process, create familiarity among the parties, and enable productive dialogue opportunities.

Critics may be dissatisfied with the unconventional manner of the President's policy toward North Korea. Nevertheless, with the summit meeting only days away, we must all step back from the politics of the policy, and ensure that the outcome of these meetings achieves the objective of making the U.S. more and not less secure. High stakes summit negotiations will necessarily involve tactics and guile, but grounding these negotiations in a core set of strategic principles is critical to American interests.

⁵ Victor Cha and Robert L. Gallucci, "Toward a New Policy and Strategy for North Korea," *George W. Bush Institute*, November 2016, <https://gwbcenter.imgix.net/Resources/gwbi-toward-a-new-policy-for-north-korea.pdf>

⁶ Joseph Bermudez and Beyond Parallel, "Yongbyon Declassified: At Ground Zero," *CSIS Beyond Parallel*, May 14, 2018, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/yongbyon-declassified-ground-zero/>