



CAN NORTH KOREA BE TRUSTED?

A historic summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un is bringing hope for peace. But it remains to be seen whether North Korea's brutal young dictator will make good on his promise to give up his nuclear weapons. BY BRYAN BROWN

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (seated) during the test of a long-range missile. Experts believe North Korea's weapons can reach the United States.

JUST A YEAR AGO, the world was bracing for a possible nuclear war between the United States and North Korea. That summer, the isolated **Communist** nation successfully tested long-range missiles. Experts say these weapons are capable of reaching cities in the U.S. At the same time, North Korea's young dictator, Kim Jong Un, threatened to reduce America to "ashes and darkness." In response, President Donald Trump vowed to unleash "fire and fury like the world has never seen" on North Korea. A nuclear conflict seemed more likely than at any time since the end of the Cold War (1947-1991).

Then, on the morning of June 12, 2018, the seemingly unthinkable happened. The two countries put aside their decades-long hostility and vowed to work together for peace—at least for the moment. Trump and Kim shook hands at a hotel in Singapore, marking the first time a sitting U.S. president has met with a leader of North Korea.

At the conclusion of their historic summit, they signed a joint statement in which Kim committed to "work towards complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." In return, Trump agreed to suspend military exercises with South Korea, which the U.S. has been conducting for decades.

The joint statement also said that Trump and Kim would seek "to build a lasting and stable peace regime" on the divided Korean Peninsula. If further talks are successful, say experts, they could even lead to a treaty that would finally end the conflict that made the U.S. and North Korea bitter enemies: the Korean War (1950-1953).



Kim Jong Un (left) with President Donald Trump at their historic summit in June

"We're ready to write a new chapter between our nations," Trump told reporters. "Yesterday's conflict does not have to be tomorrow's war."

Experts say North Korea has built nuclear weapons capable of reaching U.S. cities.

But critics warn that North Korea has failed to live up to its agreements many times before—and that the U.S. gained nothing more than vague promises from the summit. By meeting with Kim, "President Trump has granted a brutal and repressive dictatorship the international legitimacy it has long craved," says Senator Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat.

North Korea is an **authoritarian** nation where leaders have spent billions of dollars developing

nuclear weapons while millions of its people live in poverty. Anyone who challenges its leaders can be arrested and forced to work in a labor camp—or simply be killed. For decades, U.S. officials have considered North Korea to be one of America's greatest threats. North Korea has also long threatened its neighbor, South Korea, a key U.S. ally.

While the summit between Trump and Kim might suggest that a new chapter is unfolding, it remains to be seen whether anything has really changed between the nations.

A Divided Country

North Korea's troubled history with the U.S.—and its neighbors in Asia—goes back to the end of World War II (1939-1945). When the war began, Japan had been **occupying** the Korean Peninsula for decades, brutally repressing its people.

During the war, the U.S. and the Soviet Union came together →



A study in contrasts: Millions of North Koreans live in poverty (above), while South Korea (right) has become a democracy with a strong economy.



have stoked a fear of America to keep their people loyal, says Kathryn Weathersby, a historian at Korea University in Seoul: "It's very useful for an authoritarian government to have an outside enemy they can point to."

A New Beginning?

In the past two decades, the U.S. has tried negotiating with North Korea—as well as punishing it with economic sanctions over its nuclear weapons program. Neither approach has worked. When President Trump took office in 2017, he criticized his predecessors for failing to contain North Korea.

But the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, this past February brought hope for peace. In an effort to reduce tensions in the region, South Korean President Moon Jae-in invited North Korean athletes and a group of North Korean officials to the Games. That led to a meeting between Moon and Kim in April. There, the North Korean leader expressed an interest in meeting with Trump.

Ending an Old War

The world watched the summit between North Korea and the U.S. with great expectation. Yet it's unclear if real progress will come from it. The joint agreement signed by Trump and Kim leaves almost all of its details blank—to be filled in during later negotiations.

Formally ending the war may be key to stopping North Korea's nuclear threat.

Some experts believe that, unlike his father and grandfather, Kim Jong Un sincerely wants to make peace with the U.S., build North Korea's economy, and usher his country into a new age of openness with other nations.

But whether Kim will agree to give up his country's nuclear weapons remains to be seen. North Korea has made agreements to abandon its nuclear weapons program with each of the three

previous U.S. presidents but has never followed through on them.

"I'm not sure this [short] meeting ... would suggest that there's nothing to be concerned about," says Christopher Hill, a diplomat who has negotiated with North Korea in the past.

Meanwhile, although Trump said he would end joint military exercises with South Korea—which North Koreans have long seen as a rehearsal for a U.S. invasion—he is leaving U.S. troops in place in South Korea for now.

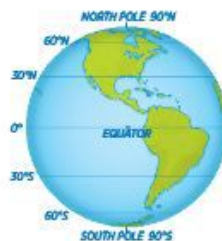
In the long run, finally negotiating an end to the Korean War will likely be necessary to stop North Korea's nuclear challenge, experts James Dobbins and Jeffrey Hornung wrote recently in *The New York Times*. "Standing ready to formally end the old war may be the key to getting there without starting a new one." ♦

CORE QUESTION Why do North Korea and the U.S. each see the other country as a threat?

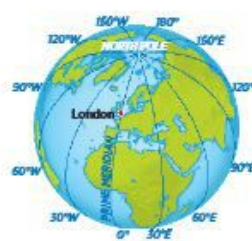
Two Koreas Seventy-three years ago, the Korean Peninsula was divided in two along a line of latitude. Today, the border of North Korea and South Korea remains near that line. Together with longitude, lines of latitude form an imaginary grid that can be used to assign a precise location to any place on Earth.



Latitude is measured in degrees (°) north (N) and south (S) of the equator, an imaginary line that circles the middle of the globe at 0°. Lines of latitude increase up to 90°N (at the North Pole) or 90°S (at the South Pole).



Longitude measures distance in degrees east (E) and west (W) of the prime meridian, an imaginary line at 0° that passes through London, England. Longitude increases up to 180° as you move east or west.



Map Skills

- Latitude measures distance north and south of what imaginary line?
- What lines on a map are used to measure distance east and west of the prime meridian?
- What zone separates North and South Korea?
- Which line of latitude intersects that border?
- Which city on the map is that latitude line closest to?
- Which city on the map is closest to the 126°E line of longitude?
- Which city is located at about 42°N, 129°E?
- What is the approximate latitude and longitude of Vladivostok, Russia?
- Which river flows into the Korea Bay at 40°N latitude?
- What is the latitude and longitude of Busan?

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