

Summit between the two Koreas offers opportunity to help heal old scars

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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (left) and South Korean President Moon Jae-in cross the military demarcation line to the South side at the border village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone on April 27, 2018. Kim made history that day by crossing over the world's most heavily armed border to greet Moon for talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons. Photo by: Korea Summit Press Pool via AP

GOYANG, South Korea — After a historic meeting, the leaders of North and South Korea said Friday, April 27, that they would seek a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. They also plan to work toward a formal end to the Korean War within the year.

However, their summit ended with few details on how they will reach those goals.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in set aside a year that saw them seemingly on the verge of war. They grasped hands and strode together across the cracked concrete marking the Koreas' border.

Meeting Considered Impossible Just Months Ago

The sight might have been considered impossible just months ago. Still, it will not erase their failure to provide any new measures on a nuclear standoff that has terrified millions. It did, however, allow the leaders to step forward toward the possibility of cooperation. They acknowledge a difficult past and the doubts that, after decades of failed talks, things will be different this time.

On the nuclear issue, the leaders repeated a previous vow to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons. It delayed one of the world's most pressing issues until a summit between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump in coming weeks.

Still, the summit produced the sight of two men from nations with a history of hostility grinning after Kim walked over the border to greet Moon. Kim became the first leader of his nation to step on southern soil since the Korean War. Both leaders then briefly stepped together into the North and back to the South.

From Missile Tests To A Historic Handshake

The summit marks a swing in relations for the countries, from nuclear threats and missile tests to signs of peace and cooperation. Perhaps the change is best illustrated by geography. Kim and Moon's historic handshake on the border occurred within walking distance of a spot with a darker history. A North Korean soldier fled south in a hail of gunfire there last year. North Korean soldiers killed two U.S. soldiers there in 1976.

Standing next to Moon after the talks ended, Kim faced cameras sending his image live to the world. He declared that the Koreas are "linked by blood as a family." The leaders also vowed to achieve "a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula," something they've said before.

The latest declaration between the Koreas, Kim said, should not repeat the "unfortunate history of past inter-Korean agreements that only reached the starting line," and which then became derailed.

Still Technically In State Of War

What happened Friday should be seen in view of the last year. The United States, its ally South Korea and North Korea threatened and raged as the North unleashed a stream of weapons tests. It should also be seen in light of the long, destructive history of the two Koreas, which fought one of the 20th century's bloodiest conflicts. They now occupy a divided peninsula that's still technically in a state of war.

Trump tweeted Friday, "KOREAN WAR TO END!" and said the United States "should be very proud of what is now taking place in Korea!" Both Koreas agreed to jointly push for talks this year with the United States and also potentially China to officially end the Korean War. It stopped with an armistice that never ended the war.

Weak Nuclear Language

Many will judge the summit based on the weak nuclear language. North Korea's nuclear and missile tests last year likely put it on the threshold of becoming a true nuclear power. The North claims it has already risen to that level. It has spent decades building its bombs despite heavy international criticism.

South Korean politicians criticized the leaders' statement. They noted it fails to get a clear commitment on nuclear disarmament. Liberty Korea Party Chairman Hong Joon-pyo denounced the summit as a "show camouflaged as peace."

However, the Koreas made progress on other points of friction between them. Moon agreed to visit Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, sometime in autumn. Both leaders said they'd meet on a regular basis and exchange calls via a recently established hotline.

Western Sea Border Named A Peace Area

They agreed to settle their disagreement over their western sea border by naming it as a peace area. Fishing activities are to be secured for both countries. They also said they would allow temporary reunions of relatives separated by the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Kim acknowledged the widespread doubts over their summit. "There are skeptical views on whether the meeting today will yield meaningful results," Kim said. "If we maintain a firm will and proceed forward hand in hand, it will be impossible at least for things to get worse than they are now."

High Hopes Summit Will Help Heal Scars

Kim, during their talks, joked that he would make sure not to interrupt Moon's sleep anymore, said Moon's spokesman, Yoon Young-chan. It was a reference to the North's early-morning missile tests last year. Kim also referred to South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island that North Korea attacked in 2010, killing four people. He said its residents, who have been living in fear of North Korean weapons, have high hopes the summit will help heal past scars. Kim said he'd visit Seoul's presidential Blue House if invited.

The historic greeting of the two leaders, which may be the images most remembered from the summit, was planned to the last detail. However, the multiple border crossings may have been unplanned.

Crossing The Dividing Line

Before the crossings, Moon stood near the Koreas' dividing line. He moved forward the moment he glimpsed Kim appearing in front of a building on the northern side. They smiled broadly and shook hands, with the border between them. Moon then invited Kim to cross into the South, and, after Kim did so, Moon said, "You have crossed into the South, but when do I get to go across?" Kim replied, "Why don't we go across now?" and then grasped Moon's hand and led him into the North and then back into the South.

Moon then led Kim along a red carpet into South Korean territory. Two fifth-grade students greeted the leaders and gave Kim flowers. An honor guard stood at attention, with a military band playing traditional Korean songs beloved by both Koreas.

They then took a photo inside the Peace House, where the summit took place.

Low Expectations

Expectations were generally low on the nuclear issue. Past so-called breakthroughs on limiting North Korea's weapons have collapsed amid charges of cheating.

Some, however, say the only way to get a deal is to do what the Koreas tried: Sit down and see what's possible.

The White House said that it is "hopeful that talks will achieve progress toward a future of peace."

Quiz

- 1 Which section highlights the idea that many were dissatisfied with the meeting between Moon and Kim?
- (A) "From Missile Tests To A Historic Handshake"
 - (B) "Weak Nuclear Language"
 - (C) "High Hopes Summit Will Help Heal Scars"
 - (D) "Crossing The Dividing Line"

- 2 Read the following statement.

Kim Jong Un believes that the meeting between North and South Korea is a step in the right direction.

Which sentence from the article provides the BEST support for the above statement?

- (A) "There are skeptical views on whether the meeting today will yield meaningful results," Kim said.
- (B) "If we maintain a firm will and proceed forward hand in hand, it will be impossible at least for things to get worse than they are now."
- (C) Kim, during their talks, joked that he would make sure not to interrupt Moon's sleep anymore, said Moon's spokesman, Yoon Young-chan.
- (D) Kim replied, "Why don't we go across now?" and then grasped Moon's hand and led him into the North and then back into the South.

- 3 Read the following passage introducing the meeting between Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in.

After a historic meeting, the leaders of North and South Korea said Friday, April 27, that they would seek a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. They also plan to work toward a formal end to the Korean War within the year.

What does the author MOST LIKELY want the reader to think about the meeting based on this introductory passage?

- (A) The author wants the reader to think that it is a successful but also unfinished meeting between the two countries.
 - (B) The author wants the reader to think that it is a common yet exciting meeting between the two countries.
 - (C) The author wants the reader to think that it is an insignificant but also necessary meeting between the two countries.
 - (D) The author wants the reader to think that it is an important yet unprecedented meeting between the two countries.
- 4 HOW will the meeting between Kim and Moon affect the development of nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula?
- (A) Both North and South Korea have agreed to hold off on developing nuclear weapons until they can be sure that they can truly trust one another.
 - (B) Both North and South Korea have agreed to hold off on developing nuclear weapons until they talk with the United States who will make the final decision.
 - (C) Both North and South Korea say that they want to be free of nuclear weapons but made no clear plan to accomplish that goal.
 - (D) Both North and South Korea say that they want to be free of nuclear weapons and they have already put things in place to make that happen soon.