Korean thaw

The stage is set for a truly historic meeting between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump

**T**he summit between the leaders of the two Koreas is perhaps the most significant step in decades to­wards securing peace on the peninsula. Kim Jong-un on Friday became the first North Korean leader since the 1953 armistice to step on South Korean soil. Not many had foreseen such a rapid turnaround in ties between the two Koreas, given the acrimony and war rhetoric of the recent past. Mr. Kim had stepped up his country's nuclear weapons programme since assuming power in 2011. Last year, U.S. President Donald Trump and he even exchanged nuclear threats. But it has be­come evident that Mr. Kim's primary goal may not be to maintain the North's nuclear capability or to live in a perpetually hostile environment. He has signalled that he is willing to barter the North's nuclear capability for economic and security assurances. At their summit, Mr. Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, whose persistence in breaking the ice was vital to the historic meeting, spared no words in expressing their desire for peace in a “nuclear-free” peninsula. They declared that there would be no more war on the peninsula. There are plans to transform the existing armistice into a peace treaty with the help of the U.S. and China, to for­mally end the Korean war by year-end.

The significance of the summit notwithstanding, peace is not a given. In the past, two South Korean Pre­sidents had travelled to the North to meet its leader. The 2007 joint declaration after an inter-Korean sum­mit had expressed almost similar goals as in the latest declaration, including on the nuclear issue. Yet rela­tions deteriorated, with the international peace process failing to make any progress and the North going back to its nuclear weapons programme. What is different this time is that the inter-Korean summit is to be fol­lowed by a meeting between Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump. Mr. Kim first conveyed the promise of denuclearisation through visiting South Korean officials. And then he tra­velled to China to discuss the proposal with President Xi Jinping before meeting Mr. Moon. He announced a freeze on further nuclear tests and said North Korea's main test site would be shut down, all aimed to show his seriousness of purpose. Mr. Trump has welcomed the Panmunjom summit and said that he expects to meet Mr. Kim within four weeks. Despite his promises, Mr. Kim is unlikely to give up his nuclear weapons unless he gets credible guarantees from the U.S., China and other countries. He is likely to also press the U.S. to withdraw its nuclear umbrella from the South. But it is quite ex­traordinary to think that Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim may actually now get down to discussing, face-to-face, steps towards denuclearising the Korean peninsula.

1. [**thaw**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/thaw) (noun) – an increase in friendliness.
2. [**peninsula**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/peninsula) (noun) – an area of land almost surrounded by water (on three sides) and one side attached to the mainland.
3. [**armistice**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/armistice) (noun) – truce, ceasefire, suspension of hostilities.
4. [**foresee**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/foresee) (verb) – anticipate, predict, expect.
5. [**turnaround**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/turnaround) (noun) – an unexpected change.
6. [**acrimony**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/acrimony) (noun) – bitterness, hostility, resentment.
7. [**rhetoric**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rhetoric) (noun) – bombast/loftiness, heroics, hyperbole/extravagant language.
8. [**step (something) up**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/step_something_up) (phrasal verb) – increase, speed up, escalate.
9. [**perpetually**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/perpetually) (adverb) – constantly, permanently, endlessly.
10. [**hostile**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hostile) (adjective) – aggressive, confrontational, belligerent.
11. [**barter**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/barter) (verb) – swap, trade off, exchange/change.
12. [**persistence**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/persistence) (noun) – determination, resolution, perseverance/purpose.
13. [**break the ice**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/break_the_ice) (phrase) –  to do something as a way to avoid social awkward tension, or and formality when two unknown people meet.
14. [**vital**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vital) (verb) – important, crucial, essential.
15. [**notwithstanding**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/notwithstanding) (adverb) – nevertheless, nonetheless, in spite of that.
16. [**given**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/given) (noun) – known fact, reality, certainty
17. [**deteriorate**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/deteriorate) (verb) – worsen, get worse, decline.
18. [**denuclearisation**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/denuclearization) (noun) – the act of removing nuclear weapons from a place.
19. [**freeze**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/freeze) (noun) – fix, suspension, hold.
20. [**shut down**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shut_down_%28or_shut_something_down%29) (phrasal verb) – close down, discontinue, cease operation.
21. [**give up**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/give_something_up) (phrasal verb) – stop, cease, discontinue.
22. [**credible**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/credible) (adjective) – convincing, acceptable; reasonable.
23. [**nuclear umbrella**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nuclear_umbrella) (noun) – a guarantee from a nuclear weapons country to a country that does not possess nuclear weapons for protection.
24. [**get down to**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/get_down_to) (phrasal verb) – begin, start, undertake, embark on.