

DIPLOMATIC TENSIONS: UNITED STATES AND NORTH KOREA SINCE 1945

A HISTORY OF WAR, ESPIONAGE, NUCLEAR DEALS AND MISSILES

TRUMP KIM SUMMIT

WHO'S PULLING THE STRINGS?

KIM JONG-UN:
MASTER PUPPETEER

The North Korean leader wants to achieve what his father and grandfather never could - a meeting with the US president which would, in his eyes, cement his legitimacy. But what will also secure his legacy is the economic development his country desperately needs and Kim has his eye on that prize too. To achieve this long-held desire he has dramatically shifted in character from isolated angry strongman to international statesman. After months of fiery rhetoric and steady nuclear progress, the North Korean leader used a speech at New Year to open the door to dialogue with the South. Relations warmed rapidly, hitting a crescendo soon after with the first meeting of Korean leaders in more than a decade. Throughout he has controlled the spectacle. The young leader has been swept to centre stage by two new props: his unprecedented nuclear capability and an unconventional US president. And by exploiting that serendipity, he has brought the US to the table.


DONALD TRUMP:
THE ULTIMATE DEALMAKER

Trump has positioned himself as the only one who could make progress on the North Korean threat, and in so doing, declared world peace within reach. He says it is his "maximum pressure" approach that enabled a breakthrough that his successors could not. Never straying from the Art of the Deal, Trump said he would leave the meeting if he didn't like where it was heading. Trump was able to portray North Korea's scramble to convince him to stay in the talks as a victory - but also to redefine the terms of the talks. It gave him room to move from demanding North Korea totally give up its nuclear weapons to accepting that could be a phased process. Poll numbers that showed most Americans - on both sides of the aisle - approve of his handling of North Korea.

XI JINPING:
THE HIDDEN PLAYER

The Chinese leader's role is the most opaque. China - North Korea's only ally - has long pushed for dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang. When Kim first emerged from international isolation this year it was for a secret meeting with Xi Jinping. A second trip followed soon after. Speculation swirled over whether that discussion had steered North Korea to take a firmer line with the US. One week after the leaders smiled over tea in Dalian, Pyongyang returned to old form, lobbing blistering attacks at the US. Donald Trump himself raised suspicions that a visit to China had sparked Kim's change in tone. Beijing wants the summit, says Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Centre. Exactly what hand Xi is playing isn't clear. What is clear is that it was only once China threw its weight behind economic sanctions that North Korea started talking.

WAR ON THE PENINSULA



US Air Force F-86 "Sabre" jets patrol skylanes over "MIG-Alley" in the northwest of North Korea, taken on Sept 5, 1953

1945
The peninsula is divided along the 38th parallel between the Soviet-backed regime of Kim Il-Sung in the North and a South under United States protection


1950
North Korea invades the South. US intervenes to lead a coalition that retakes Seoul

1953
An armistice -- not a full-fledged peace treaty -- is signed and Washington imposes sanctions on Pyongyang

SPY SHIPS AND SPY PLANES

1968
The spy ship USS Pueblo is captured by North Korea. After 11 months, its 83 crew members are released. According to Pyongyang, the ship violated its territorial waters, a charge the US denies

1969
North Korea shoots down a US spy plane



USS Pueblo captured Jan 23, 1968

BLACKLIST



Protesters in Seoul demand North Korea's apology for the 1987 bombing of a South Korean airliner, during a rally in Oct 2000

1987
Bomb allegedly planted by two North Korean agents on a Korean Air flight explodes over the Andaman Sea, killing all 115 on board

1988
Washington puts North Korea on its blacklist of state supporters of terrorism

NEW CONTACTS, NEW LEADER

1994
June: US President Jimmy Carter visits Pyongyang, meets North Korean leader Kim Il Sung
July: Kim Il Sung dies and is succeeded by his son Kim Jong Il
October: Pyongyang signs treaty with US, commits to freezing and dismantling nuclear program in exchange for the construction of civilian reactors



Thousands of people in front of a giant statue of North Korean President Kim Il Sung, who died on Jul 9, 1994

MISSILE DIPLOMACY



Image from the Korea News Service released on Sept 4, 1998 shows the launching of North Korean multi-stage rocket

1998
North Korea test-fires its first long-range missile

1999
Kim Jong-Il declares a moratorium on missile tests. Washington relaxes sanctions on North Korea

2000
US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visits Pyongyang, prompting brief thaw in relations

"AXIS OF EVIL"

2002
US President George W. Bush labels North Korea, Iran and Iraq an "axis of evil"

2004
Pyongyang refuses to negotiate with George W. Bush, denouncing him as a tyrant and political imbecile

2005
North Korea ends test moratorium blaming the Bush administration's "hostile" policy

2006
North Korea conducts its first nuclear test

NEW KIM ON THE BLOCK

2009
North Korea conducts second underground nuclear test

2011
Kim Jong Il dies. His son Kim Jong Un takes power

2013
Kim Jong Un conducts his first nuclear test

2016
Two more nuclear tests in North Korea

"FIRE AND FURY"

2017
Series of new missile tests. Kim declares "the entire US territory is now within our ICBM range"

June: American student Otto Warmbier sent back to the US with brain damage after months of detention in North Korea. Dies within a few days

August: US President Donald Trump threatens "fire and fury" if Pyongyang continues to threaten the United States

Sept 3: North Korea carries out its sixth nuclear test, claiming it to be a hydrogen bomb



Photo released Nov 30, 2017 by KCNA shows launching of Hwasong-15 missile which Pyongyang claims is capable of reaching all parts of the US

A MEETING OF MINDS?

2018
Mar 25-28: Kim meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in secretive Beijing visit, his first trip abroad as leader of North Korea
Apr 27: Historic meeting of Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the Demilitarized Zone on the North-South border



June 10: Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump arrive in Singapore for a summit scheduled for June 12

May 9: Former CIA chief and newly appointed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visits Pyongyang to finalize details for a scheduled June 12 meeting between Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump

May 30: Kim Jong Un's right-hand man Kim Yong Chol flies into New York for meetings with Pompeo, becoming the most senior North Korean official to visit the US in 18 years

TRUMP VS KIM INSULTS

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will shake hands today for a photo-op unimaginable only a few months ago. The nuclear-armed pair have hurled personal insults at each other that would not be out of place in the playground. Here are a few of the more memorable slurs.

MENTALLY-DERANGED DOTARD

Kim had people around the world reaching for the dictionary when he called Trump a "mentally deranged US dotard", saying he would "tame" him with "fire". The insult, equivalent to calling Trump an "old lunatic", was a response to Washington's threat to "totally destroy" North Korea and came at the height of the war of words between the two foes. According to online dictionary Merriam Webster, searches for "dotard" were "high as a kite" after the comments hit the headlines.

Doubling down on his insulting language, he referred to Kim as a "sick puppy" on the heels of an intercontinental ballistic missile test by Pyongyang in November. Trump had previously referred to the North Korean leader as a "madman with nuclear weapons".

'FRIGHTENED DOG'

In his "dotard" statement in response to Trump's UN speech, Kim also said: "A frightened dog barks louder." It was not the only time North Korea has adopted canine references to describe Trump's statements. After the US president noted his nuclear button was "much bigger and more powerful" than Kim's - "and it works" - Pyongyang branded the outburst the "bark of a rabid dog".

'FIRE AND FURY'

Not a personal insult, but one of the most intimidating of Trump's threats came in August after US media reported Pyongyang had successfully miniaturised a nuclear warhead to fit into a missile. "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States," said Trump, his arms folded in defensive and bellicose body language. "They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen." In response Pyongyang said it was considering firing missiles towards the Pacific US territory of Guam.

'SHORT AND FAT'

It appeared that the 71-year-old Trump took offence not at the allegation of insanity but rather the dig at his age. In response to the "dotard" insult, he took aim at the North Korean leader's physical dimensions. "Why would Kim Jong Un insult me by calling me 'old', when I would NEVER call him 'short and fat'?" he tweeted. In an editorial, the North's ruling party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said that Trump had "malignantly hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership", and was "a hideous criminal sentenced to death by the Korean people".

'ROCKET MAN'

In his debut speech at the United Nations last September, Trump derided Kim as a "rocket man" on a "suicide mission for himself and for his regime".



South Korean students unfurl a big reunification flag inscribed with a slogan that reads "We will make a peaceful Korean peninsula with our own hands" at Imjingak peace park near the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) dividing the two Korea's in the border city of Paju, yesterday.

NEWS IN brief

Saudi Arabia intercepts another Yemen missile

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi air defences yesterday intercepted a ballistic missile over the southern city of Jizan after being fired from rebel-held territory in neighbouring Yemen, a Saudi-led military coalition said. No casualties were reported.

Indian bank fraud seeks asylum in Britain: report

AFP, Mumbai

Indian billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi, wanted over an alleged massive bank fraud, has fled to Britain where he is seeking asylum, according to a report yesterday. Modi, whose celebrity clients have included actress Naomi Watts and Kate Winslet, is accused of involvement in a \$1.8 billion scam against Punjab National Bank (PNB), India's second-largest state-run lender.

HK jails top leader for six years

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's leading independence activist was jailed for six years yesterday for his involvement in some of the city's worst protest violence for decades. Edward Leung was convicted in May of rioting during the 2016 running battles with police, when demonstrators hurled bricks torn up from pavements and set rubbish alight in the commercial district of Mong Kok.

920,000 displaced in Syria in 2018: UN

AFP, Geneva

More than 920,000 people were displaced inside Syria during the first four months of 2018, the highest level in the seven-year conflict, the United Nations said yesterday.

"We are seeing a massive displacement inside Syria... From January to April, there were over 920,000 newly displaced people," Panos Moutmzis, the UN regional humanitarian coordinator for Syria, told reporters in Geneva.

"This was the highest displacement in that short period of time we have seen since the conflict started," he said.

It brings the number of people internally displaced in the war-ravaged country to 6.2 million, while there are still some 5.6 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, according to UN figures.

Moutmzis said most of the newly displaced had been forced on the move by escalations in fighting in the former rebel bastion of Eastern Ghouta and within the northwestern province of Idlib, which is almost entirely controlled by various jihadist and hardline rebels.

His comments came after several deadly air strikes in recent days in Idlib that have left dozens of people dead, including children.

He said Idlib is part of the "de-escalation" agreement for Syria reached between Turkey, Russia and Iran, and warned of the dire consequences if the province, which has some 2.5 million inhabitants, sinks into full-blown conflict.

IS Kabul attack kills 13

AFP, Kabul

At least 13 people were killed and 31 wounded when a suicide attacker blew himself up among government ministry employees in Kabul who had left work early for Ramadan and were waiting to take a bus home, officials said.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the latest attack in the Afghan capital, which comes a day before the government's ceasefire with the Taliban is expected to start.

The blast occurred at the main gate of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, police and health ministry spokesmen told AFP.

Employees were gathered at the entrance of the compound waiting for a bus to take them home when the suicide bomber blew himself up in the crowd, said rural ministry spokesman Faridoon Azhand, who was inside the building at the time.

IS claimed the attack via their Amaq propaganda agency.

The attack was just one of several around Afghanistan yesterday.

Elsewhere, militants raided a government building in the eastern city of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, prompting terrified employees to jump out of the windows, officials said.

A suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance to the education department, triggering a fierce battle between gunmen and Afghan security forces, Nangarhar provincial governor spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told AFP.

At least 10 people were wounded, city health department director Najibullah Kamawal told AFP.

In another incident, an explosion inside a house in Kabul killed one person and wounded three others, Stanikzai said.

Taliban and IS militants have stepped up their attacks on Kabul in particular in recent years, making it the deadliest place in the country for civilians.

The Taliban said Saturday their fighters would stop attacking Afghan security forces, but only for the first three days of Eid, the holiday capping Ramadan. They said they would continue attacking US-led NATO troops.

MIGRANT CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Spain to take in stranded ship

AFP, Rome

Spain yesterday offered to take in a ship stranded in the Mediterranean with 629 migrants aboard after Italy and Malta refused to let the vessel dock in their ports.

The migrants, including pregnant women and scores of children, were saved by the French charity SOS Mediterranee on Saturday.

They were taken on board its ship Aquarius, which is now between Malta and Sicily.

But Malta and Italy -- whose new populist government has vowed a tough new stance on immigration -- have both refused to take the migrants in, triggering concern in the international community about their plight.

Spain's new Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez agreed to allow the ship to dock in its eastern port of Valencia.

Earlier, UN had called on Malta and Italy to immediately allow the boat to dock, describing the situation as "an urgent humanitarian imperative". The EU and the bloc's biggest member state Germany made similar pleas.

The migrants were rescued in six separate night-time operations in the central Mediterranean on Saturday.



This picture taken on June 8, 2018 shows Afghan peace activists shouting slogans in demand to an end to the war as they start their march from Helmand to Kabul in Ghazni province. Hobbled by blisters and stalked by hunger, dozens of Afghan protesters are marching hundreds of kilometres across the war-torn country demanding an end to the nearly 17-year conflict.

Xi backs nuclear deal in talks with Rouhani

AFP, Beijing

Chinese leader Xi Jinping called for the Iran nuclear deal to be "earnestly" implemented as he met the country's president following the US withdrawal from the pact, state media said yesterday.

Xi met one-on-one with Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani on Sunday following a two-day regional security summit in the eastern Chinese city of Qingdao that also included Russia and former Soviet republics.

President Donald Trump announced last month the US was withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal and re-imposing sanctions that would hit international businesses working in the Islamic republic.

The other parties to the deal -- Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia -- have vowed to stay in the accord but their companies risk huge penalties if they keep doing business in Iran.

In his meeting with Rouhani, Xi described the deal as "an important outcome of multilateralism", according to the official Xinhua news service.

Xi said the deal is "conducive to safeguarding peace and stability in the Middle East and the international non-proliferation regime, and should continue to be implemented earnestly," according to Xinhua.