



How to Prepare for a Third U.S.-North Korea Summit

The Trump administration—like the administrations that came before it—is currently unwilling to consider a phased approach. And therein lies its biggest mistake.

by [Emily B. Landau](#) [Shimon Stein](#) / May 2, 2019

After the abrupt termination of the second summit held between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on the nuclear issue in late February, the latest word is that Trump is tentatively opening the door to a possible third summit.

The message came in the wake of Kim Jong-un's remarks regarding the sanctions on his country, and the need to deal a "serious blow" to those hostile forces that are imposing them. Yet while Kim is clearly unhappy with the continued economic pressure on his country, it is notable that he did not threaten to enhance his nuclear capability, nor did he threaten the United States directly. In fact, the "serious blow" he referred to was the strengthening of North Korea's self-reliant economy. And shortly thereafter he said he was willing to meet with Trump again, but only if the United States changes its approach and gets serious about its proposal to North Korea by the end of the year. This is in contrast to Kim's threat in November 2018 to restart his nuclear program if the United States does not lift sanctions, and it is in contrast to his January 2019 threat to take a "new path" toward the United States if it does not lift sanctions. This implies that North Korea is keeping the door open to dialogue after Hanoi and that the Trump administration could have more leverage in such a dialogue, because Kim is demonstrating that he is cautious about directly antagonizing the president. Trump's leverage seems to have been strengthened at the Hanoi summit, when Kim realized that the U.S. president was willing to walk away from the meeting without a deal.

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