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## ***Chinese and North Korean leaders pledge closer links at Pyongyang summit***

Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korea's Chairman Kim Jong-un pledged at a two-day summit last week to deepen cooperation and try to resolve tensions on the Korean Peninsula, according to their respective state media.

Xi and other high-level Chinese officials arrived in Pyongyang last Thursday for a state visit. It was a Chinese leader's first state visit to North Korea since Hu Jintao's trip in October 2005 and the fifth summit between Xi and North Korea's Chairman Kim Jong-un since last year.

The state media reported that both Xi and Kim supported a resumption of talks between the US and the North. US President Donald Trump walked out of his second summit with Kim in February, and no working-level talks have taken place since.

China's CCTV quoted Kim saying: "Over the past year, North Korea has taken active steps to ease tensions, but they have failed to draw active response from the relevant country [the United States]. This was not what I wanted to see." However, Kim reportedly agreed to "maintain patience," while adding "I hope the relevant country will see the DPRK face-to-face and address each other's issues of interest so as to resolve the Korean Peninsula issue."

The Stalinist regime is demanding a relaxation of US sanctions in exchange for earlier measures taken, including a halt to nuclear and long-range missile tests. However, the Trump administration is insisting on the full dismantling of the nuclear weapons program

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first. Kim's promise of "patience" is likely a response to Beijing's concerns that additional short-range missile launches like those in May could be used by Washington to again ramp up tensions on the Korean Peninsula, ultimately aimed at preparing for war with China.

Pyongyang has offered to dismantle its weapons program in exchange for supposed security guarantees from Washington. The regime is worried that once it surrenders its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles—the few bargaining chips it has in dealing with the US—it will end up, like Iraq or Libya, becoming another target of invasion and regime-change operations.

The Chinese president promised to address these concerns. "China, Xi said, is willing to provide assistance within its capacity for the DPRK to address its legitimate security and development concerns... and play a positive and constructive role in achieving denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and long-term stability in the region," the Xinhua News Agency reported. Xi stated: "The international community hopes that talks between the DPRK and the United States will move forward and bear fruit."

Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, said Xi's visit "displayed China's determination to stay committed to consolidating the traditional China-DPRK friendship, supporting the implementation of DPRK's new strategic line and promoting a political solution to solving the nuclear issue in the peninsula." This new strategic line prioritizes economic development over nuclear weapons.

The forging of closer economic relations between Beijing and Pyongyang will not sit well in Washington. The Trump administration has alternated between threats of complete annihilation and promises of economic growth, as a US ally, to coerce Pyongyang into falling into line with Washington's agenda. The US's goal is not to bring about peace on the Korean Peninsula, but rather to remove an obstacle to its plans to subordinate China to Washington's interests economically and, if necessary, militarily.

The US continued to lash out at Pyongyang prior to and during Xi's visit. Wednesday afternoon in the US, as Xi headed for Pyongyang, the US Treasury Department imposed new sanctions on North Korea and a Russian financial firm Washington accused of providing services to support Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. That same day, US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun claimed in a speech at the

Atlantic Council think tank that the “door is wide open” to North Korea for talks without preconditions.

Biegun claimed: “We want to be very careful in the messages we send.” The message being sent is a warning to Pyongyang that Washington will not accept any outcome of the talks between China and North Korea, or actions by the two more broadly, that go against its strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Washington threatened further sanctions on Friday. Sam Brownback, the US ambassador at large for international religious freedom, said “North Korea’s horrible on human rights and religious freedom” and declared: “We’re going to continue to exert strong pressure.” The denunciation was part of an annual report on “religious freedom.”

As usual, the US’s invocation of human rights is entirely hypocritical. Its barbaric treatment of refugees at home and support for brutal dictatorships, such as those in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, make plain Washington’s actual contempt for “human rights.”

China’s own interests on the Korean Peninsula lie in maintaining the status quo, while removing the pretexts for Washington’s military aggression, but this will not stop the drive to war in the long run. Beijing is also concerned that if Washington does manage to pull North Korea into its orbit, China will lose a strategic buffer against US military forces in South Korea.

This possibility is not out of the question. Kim responded positively to a letter he received from Trump. The North Korean news agency KCNA reported Sunday: “After reading the letter, the Supreme Leader of the Party, the state and the armed forces said with satisfaction that the letter is of excellent content.” The report said Kim “would seriously contemplate the interesting content,” without elaborating further on the content. The letter was apparently a response to one Kim sent to Trump on June 10.

Amid the renewed manoeuvring, South Korea also weighed in, pushing for an inter-Korean summit before Trump arrives in Seoul after the June 28-29 G20 summit in Japan. Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, stated Friday: “We are sending the message to North Korea that [a summit] is not physically impossible, and that it is necessary and desirable.” Xi also will meet with Trump on the sidelines of the G20.

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