

## All you need to know about inter-Korean summit

Message of peace: A girl writes a note next to a map of the Korean peninsula during the welcoming event for the summit between South and North Korea, in Seoul on Saturday. AP

### What is the inter-Korean summit?

The leaders of North and South Korea, Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in, will meet in the demilitarised zone between the two countries on Friday to discuss the 'denuclearisation' of the Korean peninsula and the official end to the Korean War (1950-53) which has technically still not concluded.

### How did the summit come about?

North Korea had conducted a number of nuclear and ballistic missile tests under Mr. Kim's rule, including in 2017, defying United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Consequently, tensions ran high between stakeholders in the region as Mr. Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump exchanged threats of war. Mr. Moon, who took over as President of South Korea last May, has been a proponent of engagement between the Koreas, a cause he has pushed. In his 2018 New Year's Day speech, Mr. Kim said he would send a North Korean delegation to the Winter Olympics in South Korea in February. Since then, there have been several high-level diplomatic meetings leading to the setting up of the summit.

The global nuclear cloud is darkening

### How is the U.S. involved in peace talks?

The U.S. is a major stakeholder in the region where two of its key allies, South Korea and Japan, are located. The U.S. has over 28,000 troops in South Korea and the country's involvement in peace talks is to be expected. As the thaw occurred, Mr. Kim conveyed his willingness to talk with Mr. Trump via the South Koreans. The two leaders will meet at the end of May or in early June. U.S. Secretary of State nominee, Mike Pompeo, made a secret visit to Pyongyang to meet with Mr. Kim around April 1, possibly to prepare for the Trump-Kim summit. The outcome of the U.S.-North Korea meeting is particularly difficult to predict because both Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump are unpredictable and prone to dramatic gestures. According to Mr. Moon, the North Koreans have not demanded that U.S. troops withdraw from South Korea as a precondition for denuclearisation but have asked for security and an end to hostility. Mr. Trump, whilst praising Mr. Kim, has said that sanctions will remain in place until a deal is reached.

### What about China?

China is the largest trading partner of both North and South Korea. Some 90% of North Korea's trade passes through China. Mr. Kim has had a cooler approach to China relative to his father or grandfather, both of whom ran North Korea before him. As China participated in UN sanctions against North Korea, the relationship between the two countries was further strained. Mr. Kim made a sudden visit to Beijing last month — his first foreign trip as North Korea's leader, and Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to visit Pyongyang later this year. His manoeuvres could be a clever strategy to engage with all stakeholders, some of whom, like the U.S. and China, have competing interests in the region. Reaching out to China before talks with the U.S. could also provide some backing to North Korea. It is likely though that Mr. Kim will want to reduce North

Korea's dependence on China over the longer term. China, on the other hand, is unlikely to be satisfied for long with the side role that it seems to be playing at the moment in the peace process.

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