

The Second US - DPRK Summit in Hanoi

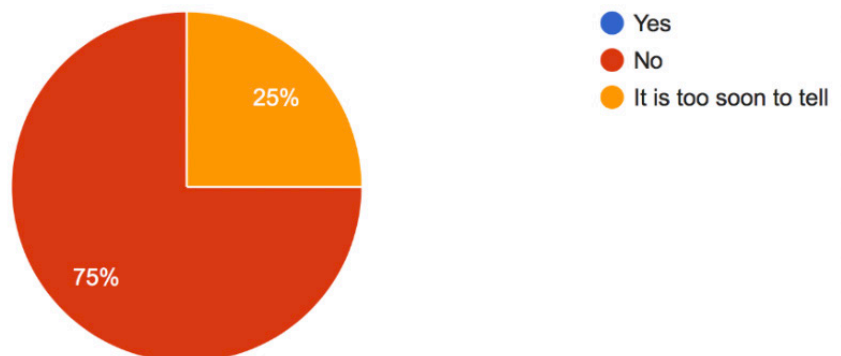
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In the aftermath of the second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, we asked a group of leading Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia security experts based in Europe for their assessment of the outcome (the responses were collected before 4 March 18:00, Central European Time). A total of sixteen experts participated in the survey. Overall, the experts are optimistic about the continuation of diplomatic engagement between the United States and North Korea, as well as between both Koreas. However, their assessments of the two sides' bargaining positions vary. While there is an agreement that the US is at least partially responsible for the lack of a deal in Hanoi, there are divisions regarding who is in a stronger position following the summit.

by Ramon Pacheco Pardo & Tongfi Kim

1. Does the lack of an agreement during the Hanoi summit spell the end of the current US-North Korea diplomatic process?

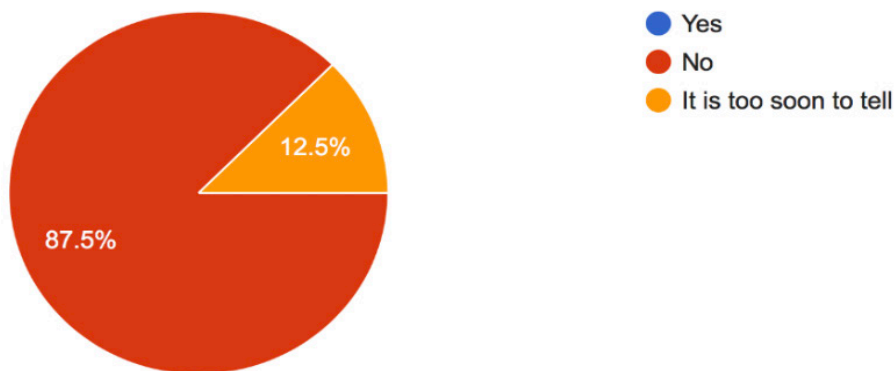
None of the experts thinks that the Hanoi summit spells the end of the current diplomatic process between the US and North Korea. Indeed, 75 per cent believe that diplomacy will continue. Among them, Alica Kizekova (IIR Prague) "anticipated no agreement prior to the summit" anyway. Tereza Novotna (FU Berlin) maintains that "both sides have an interest in continuing the rapprochement, but they will want to "regroup" first and we shouldn't expect a Trump-Kim 3.0 anytime soon". Milos Prochazka (Cornelius University Bratislava) suggests that "President Trump made a huge gesture to halt regular FTE (field training exercise) with South Korea without anything in return from the North Koreans". As for those who think that it is too soon to tell, one respondent argues that "what could be seen as a faint glimmer of silver lining is that the two leaders refrained from going ballistic and continued to express goodwill and affection in their own way, leaving room to pick up the talks again down the road".



2. Does the lack of an agreement during the Hanoi summit spell the end of the current inter-Korean diplomatic process?

There is confidence among the respondents that the inter-Korean process will continue. Mario Esteban (Elcano Royal Institute) suggests that “there [are] still incentives for both parties to continue with the process”. Magnus Lundstrom (Swedish Institute of International Affairs) believes that “the [inter-Korean] project is far too important for Moon and his administration [so he will continue] efforts to reach joint economic cooperation and de-escalation [...],

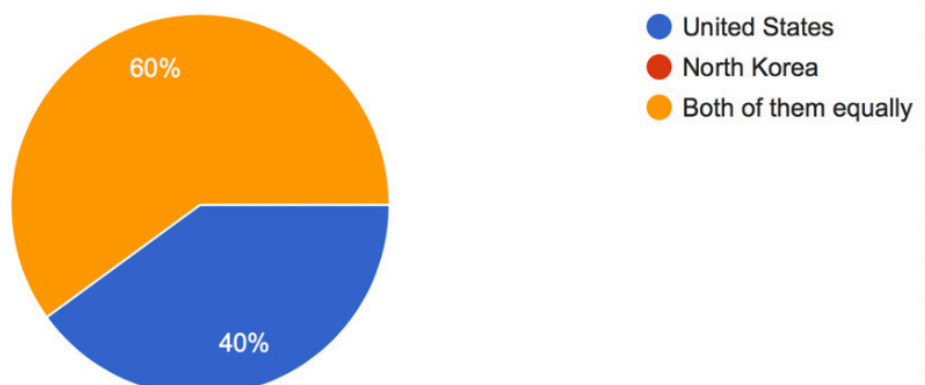
possibly independent from Washington, even though they might be largely insignificant without the US’ blessing”. Bernt Berger (DGAP) explains that “It is a separate process [even though] sanctions relief is needed for greater rapprochement”. Among those who think it is too soon to tell, one respondent says that she “[is] sure that the Moon administration would be very eager to keep on working, but it is difficult to advance further without the US-NK link”.



3. Who is more to blame for the lack of an agreement?

Most of the experts blamed both of them equally. Eric Ballbach (FU Berlin) notes that talks “in the working level were already at a different stage,” and the negotiators at the working level should have been “given the necessary time and mandate.” Christopher Green (International Crisis Group) blames “[m]isrepresentation and historical tone-deafness” of the United States and “impracticality and inflexibility” of North Korea. Meanwhile, 40 per cent of

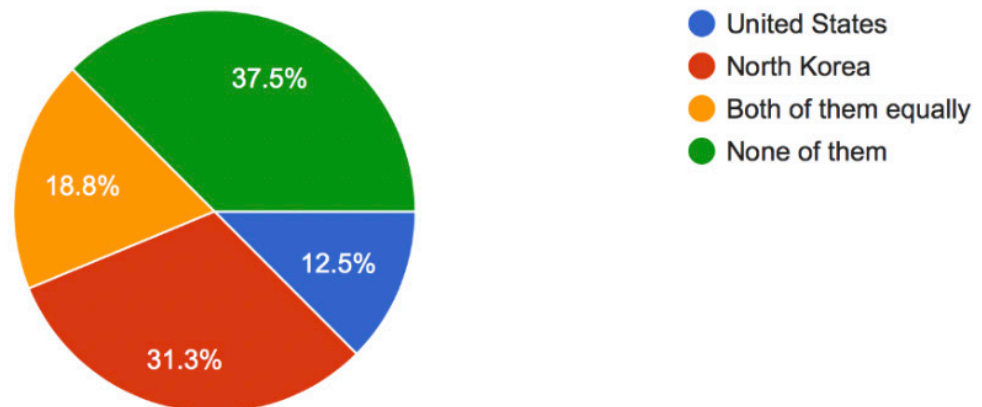
respondents blamed the United States more. Antonio Fiori (University of Bologna) criticizes that the US “approach shows Washington’s unpreparedness to understand” North Korea’s strategy. Lucia Husenicova (Matej Bel University) argues that the United States should have taken more time to prepare for the summit and believes that its decision was “influenced by [the] domestic situation more than by any other issue”.



4. Who comes out stronger from the Hanoi summit?

The experts' opinions varied on the question of who comes out stronger from the Hanoi summit. Six respondents answered that none of them do. Marco Milani (University of Sheffield) explains that there "were very high expectations for the Hanoi summit and now the situation might be more complicated". Five respondents chose North Korea. Alexandra Sakaki (SWP) notes that "North Korea gained from the summit" because Trump cancelled two major US-ROK military exercises [and] the North can continue

[...] its missile and nuclear programmes (even without testing)." Three respondents believe that both of them came out equally strong from the summit. Lorenzo Mariani (IAI) reasons that "the summit can be considered as a win-win [domestically as] both leaders proved their resolve". Finally, two respondents chose the United States. Another respondent argues that "North Korea needs the sanctions lifting badly [and] sooner or later, they will realize that they have to pay a higher price".



This publication analyses the views of the Europe Korea Expert Panel which is a network of the top Europe-based experts on Korean and Northeast Asian affairs drawn from think tanks, academia and research institutes. The panel was established to highlight European views on developments in the Korean Peninsula. The KF-VUB Korea Chair analyses these views and presents its own reflections on the results. [Visit this link to view the experts in the Europe Korea Expert Panel.](#)

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The KF-VUB Korea Chair (www.korea-chair.eu) at the Institute for European Studies (www.ies.be) is the primary contact point in Europe on policy issues related to the Korean Peninsula and plays a strategic role in furthering Europe-Korea relations. As a joint initiative between the Korea Foundation and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), the Chair acts as an independent platform in Brussels and across Europe to advance academically rigorous and informed discussions on policy questions that are of relevance to Europe and the Republic of Korea. It conducts policy research and discussions on a wide range of areas, with special focus on the security of the Korean Peninsula, Europe-Korea relations and South Korea's foreign policy.

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