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# Kim Jong Un Meets Xi in China After Singapore Summit With Trump; Beijing pledges 'constructive role' in peace process on Korean Peninsula

Jeremy Page; Chun Han Wong . Wall Street Journal (Online) ; New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]19 June 2018: n/a.

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## FULL TEXT

BEIJING--A week after meeting U.S. President Donald Trump , North Korean leader Kim Jong Un embarked on a trip to key ally China for a visit analysts expect to focus on economic relief for his sanctions-hit country.

Mr. Kim's visit Tuesday and Wednesday is his third to China in as many months . It comes as the U.S. renews pressure on Beijing to enforce U.N. sanctions on Pyongyang to ensure that it dismantles its nuclear weapons program.

Mr. Kim's trip comes at a time of accelerating diplomacy around North Korea and its nuclear and missile programs. While the visit wasn't previously announced, foreign diplomats had said they expected Mr. Kim to visit China to brief Chinese President Xi Jinping on his June 12 meeting with Mr. Trump in Singapore and discuss economic cooperation and other issues.

Mr. Xi greeted Mr. Kim with a welcoming ceremony including a military honor guard and a crowd of cheering children at the Great Hall of the People overlooking Beijing's Tiananmen Square, according to state broadcaster China Central Television.

Mr. Xi said China hoped that North Korea and the U.S. "will implement the results of the summit and that relevant parties will join forces to advance the peace process on the peninsula," the television report said.

"China will, as always, play a constructive role," it quoted Mr. Xi as saying. He also pledged to support North Korea's economic development.

Mr. Kim described China as "our great and friendly neighbor" and Mr. Xi as "a great leader we respect and trust," according to the report.

The North Korean leader said he hoped to work with China and other parties on the establishment of a long-lasting peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula, the report said.

Mr. Xi and other Chinese leaders had been expected to push for a direct, active role in negotiations over the Korean Peninsula's future, including participation in talks with Washington, Seoul and Pyongyang over a peace treaty,

according to foreign diplomats.

Mr. Kim, meanwhile, is expected to urge Mr. Xi to ease the sanctions that have hurt the North Korean economy in the past year—and which U.S. officials have said helped compel Mr. Kim to engage in negotiations.

During his China visit, Mr. Kim would "make more clear his requirement for Chinese economic help," and Mr. Xi is likely to agree to help, said Shi Yinhong, an international relations professor at Beijing's Renmin University. "There could be some space to provide economic help not covered by sanctions."

U.N. sanctions have crippled North Korean exports, especially to China, in the past year. Bans on North Korea's coal, seafood and garment exports severely reduced its foreign-currency earning, while U.N. restrictions on North Korean imports of fuel and consumer goods pushed up prices in many of the country's markets, according to visitors. Some economists project that Pyongyang could soon run out of the foreign currency it needs to buy essential imports such as fertilizer and spare parts for machinery.

Washington wants to see the economic pressure on Mr. Kim sustained. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged Beijing to maintain United Nations sanctions on Pyongyang during meetings with Mr. Xi and senior Chinese officials last week to brief them on the outcome of the Trump-Kim summit.

Mr. Pompeo told a joint news conference with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, on Thursday that China had committed to maintaining the U.N. sanctions until the denuclearization process was complete.

Mr. Wang, however, didn't mention sanctions, instead reaffirming China's support for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and calling for security guarantees to address North Korea's "legitimate" concerns.

The Chinese foreign minister also gave a noncommittal response when asked if China would support Mr. Pompeo's plan, outlined on a visit to Seoul last week, to try to achieve "major disarmament" of North Korea's nuclear weapons within 2½ years.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, at a regular weekday media briefing Tuesday, reiterated that China opposes sanctions outside the U.N. Security Council framework and said that the U.N. sanctions are "not a goal in themselves." He called on all parties to support current diplomatic efforts to achieve denuclearization.

While China wants North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, it also wants to preserve its influence in Pyongyang and prevent the emergence of a unified, democratic and U.S.-allied Korea, according to diplomats and international security analysts.

China backed the North in the 1950-53 Korean War and has been its biggest trade partner for decades. But it stepped up enforcement of U.N. sanctions in the past year or so in response to Pyongyang's nuclear-weapons and missile tests.

In the run-up to the Singapore summit, Beijing grew concerned that it was being sidelined in regional diplomacy, and that Messrs. Trump and Kim could reach a deal that didn't take into account China's interests.

The summit's outcome allayed some of those concerns, especially President Trump's commitment to suspend joint military exercises with South Korea. China had long called for that in exchange for North Korea freezing its nuclear weapons and missile tests.

China was also heartened by Mr. Trump's statement in Singapore that he backed a role for Beijing in talks over a peace treaty to replace the armistice signed at the end of the Korean War. Discussions among U.S. officials and in the April meeting between Mr. Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in raised doubts about whether China needed to be involved in a peace treaty.

Japanese and South Korean media reported earlier Tuesday that Mr. Kim was likely to travel to China by air. This would be the third time the North Korean leader is known to fly abroad since taking power in late 2011.

Mr. Kim traveled to Beijing in late March by train, his first known trip outside of his country as leader. He then flew to the Chinese port city of Dalian in early May, meeting Mr. Xi again in a trip seen as preparation for the summit with Mr. Trump.

For the Singapore summit, the North Korean leader flew to the city-state and back to Pyongyang on an Air China Boeing 747, placing him under the aegis of Beijing during the longest flights he has made since assuming power.

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Credit: By Jeremy Page and Chun Han Wong

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