In 2016, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un threatened to strike the residence of South Korea's president with missiles, foreshadowing mounting tensions that have kept the world on alert ever since.

So, when Kim stretched out his hand and smiled at South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday, the scene could hardly have been more surreal.

The historic moment was the result of months of negotiations and pressure by both China and the United States, even though it remains unclear how far North Korea is willing to give in. North Korea is also still responsible for horrifying crimes against its own population, including labor camps and torture — something that wasn't addressed in a statement the two leaders released Friday.

In their release, Kim and Moon announced their “common goal” of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, which was the clearest such commitment ever agreed to by the two nations. Curiously, North Korea's pledge to denuclearize comes after a year in which Kim made major advances in developing and testing nuclear weapons.

Can the North Korean leader still retreat from his pledge and go back into escalation mode? He certainly can, but Friday's overt friendliness may add an extra obstacle. Kim must have been aware of the message every public move Friday — a lot of hugging, smiling and handshaking — would send

to the world. (The summit was not broadcast live inside North Korea, and it remains uncertain how much of the friendly scenes North Koreans will be able to see.)

Initially surrounded by North Korean officials who later stayed behind, Kim approached the border that has divided North and South Korea for almost seven decades. On the South Korean side of that border — marked by a small barrier — Moon was waiting. Both shook hands, before Kim stepped into South Korea.

No North Korean leader has ever set foot in South Korea since the de-facto end of the peninsula's war that raged on until 1953.

Within the first seconds of the historic visit, Kim went off script, asking the South Korean leader to also step into North Korea.

In a scene that immediately went around the world, Kim and Moon then walked off to North Korea hand in hand, where they stayed for some moments before returning to South Korea and heading off to Panmunjom, the “truce village.” (The armistice that ended the Korean War was signed there in 1953.)

Friday may have been about war and peace, but it also was about noodles.

In another out-of-this-world moment, the dictator known for starving his own population said: “We brought cold noodles from Pyongyang. I hope the president will enjoy the noodles from far away.” Kim paused, realizing that Seoul and Pyongyang are only about 120 miles away, and continued: “Well, I can't say that they came from far away.”

He then struck a more serious tone, reminding everyone that he and Moon would now “talk frankly, seriously and honestly.”

The “frank” talks didn't appear to go badly.
In a break, Kim and Moon planted a pine tree “as an expression of their wish for peace and prosperity” and poured water from a North Korean and a South Korean river over it.

A second Korean War was almost triggered in August 1976 when North Korean soldiers killed two U.S. officers and wounded four Americans and four South Koreans who had been on a mission to trim a tree within the demilitarized zone that separates South and North Korea.

The message of Friday's tree-planting ceremony? No more accidental escalations.

Kim and Moon repeatedly appeared to deviate from the carefully prepared schedule and the official choreography. After the two shook hands while the summit was already underway, Kim and Moon hugged.

While the summit certainly produced historical images, experts were also surprised about more tangible results. At the end of the day, Kim and Moon agreed on a three-page statement, disseminated as the “Panmunjom Declaration,” and named after the village they both visited.

In their declaration, they state that “South and North Korea shared the view that the measures being initiated by North Korea are very meaningful and crucial for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and agreed to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities in this regard.”

“South and North Korea agreed to actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” the statement read.

Friday's images could eventually accompany history book sections on how tensions on the Korean Peninsula faded — or as a moment of false hopes.
No matter what happens, there'll always be the video of Kim and Moon, standing hand in hand while listening to Korean pop after sunset.

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