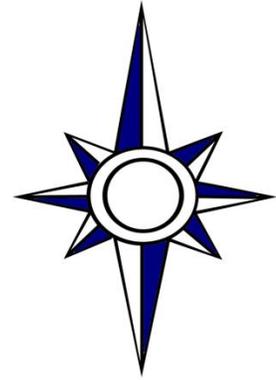


Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



South Korea-North Korea Relations: A Sporting Chance, or Playing Games?

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By one measure, mid-2014 was a period of progress in inter-Korean relations as the volley of tirades and insults from Pyongyang hurled at the Seoul and President Park Geun-hye began tapering off in late May. By the end of August, there were hints of hope for improving relations. First, there was an agreement to have athletes from the North participate in the 17th Asian Games in Incheon in late September, although not without some accusations of bad faith in the process. Further, after several rather clumsy attempts by both sides at outlining a mutually acceptable framework for North-South cooperation, there were initial signals that they may be getting close to finding a way to get past the “May 24 sanctions,” which have been in place since the sinking of the *Cheonan* in 2010.

Bad language: from foul, to merely rude – and less personal

By one measure, mid-2014 was a period of progress in inter-Korean relations. As we noted in the last issue of *Comparative Connections*, the quadrimester began with Pyongyang directing a volley of insults – foul even by North Korean standards – against South Korea’s President Park Geun-hye. We predicted then that this uncouth brattishness would stop, and so it did – by the end of May. Having called Park a prostitute four times (and once, a comfort woman) as of when our last issue went to press, DPRK media did so twice more later in May. Once again, in a journal of record it is depressingly necessary not to overlook these vile tirades.

On May 12, the official *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* carried a [statement](#) by the Panmunjom Mission of the Korean People’s Army (KPA), under the headline, “U.S. Urged Not to Patronize Its Colonial Stooze’s Racket for Confrontation with Fellow Countrymen.” As this header suggests, this was mainly addressed to Washington. One can only wonder at the mindset of those tasked with concocting this propaganda. Language apart, anyone seriously wanting to drive a wedge between the two allies would surely attempt a little more subtlety. After a few of the statutory animal metaphors (“like a wolf pouncing upon its prey ... The U.S. behavior is just like birds of a feather flocking together”), we get this:

No matter how precious any alliance with the puppet forces is and no matter how valuable ‘honeymoon’ with the disgraceful political prostitute is, the U.S. should have said and behaved like a big country according to reason. If Washington pays heed only to what its stooges trumpet, it is bound to be accused of being a senile grandfather trying to stop a child from crying.

By contrast, the P-word's final outing, for now at least, was a diatribe solely aimed at Seoul. On May 25, under the headline "Judgment of Park Geun Hye Demanded" *KCNA* [quoted](#) the Federation of Korean Economic Workers in China – an unlikely-sounding body; it may well be fictitious – as calling for a "struggle to judge the Park Geun Hye group of murderers."

That refers to the tragedy that for months lay heavy on South Korea: the April 16 sinking of the ferry *Sewol* when 304 died, mostly teenagers from a single school on a trip. After a single message of condolence sent from the North's to the South's Red Cross, North Korean media chose instead to use this as yet another stick with which to beat Park and her government. Going far beyond any legitimate mention of the system failings which this disaster exposed, the *KCNA* article speaks of "the struggle of people angered at the inhuman act of the Park Geun Hye group of hooligans which buried hundreds of students at the sea" [sic], and even calls this accident "an unprecedented massacre deliberately committed by the Park group":

Park has not yet made sincere apology but shift the responsibilities onto her yes men. She invited her American master to visit south Korea, kowtowing to him and currying favor with him. Such prostitute, special-class traitor has to be eliminated at an early date. All overseas Koreans ... are well aware that it is not possible to expect anything as long as the venomous serpent remains in Chongwadae.

And then they stopped, or at least moderated their language. While *KCNA* criticized Park and her government almost daily during June, and slightly less often in July, there were no more personal insults. Even the usual armory of political diatribe, notably "puppet," was applied more in general terms, or to particular ministers who said something that annoyed Pyongyang, rather than Park herself. On June 26, the General Association of Koreans in China – perhaps imaginary, again – marked the anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 by [denouncing](#) "the Park Geun Hye group of traitors [as] the sycophant and quisling without an equal in the world." But this sort of talk was growing rarer. And then, someone decided to lay off Park altogether. Since Aug. 1, *KCNA* has mentioned her by name only once: on Sept. 5, in moderate terms. Sadly, this does not mean all insults have stopped. On Aug. 20, *KCNA* [called](#) ROK Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se a puppet, quisling and U.S. colonial lackey.

In North Korea, none of this happens by chance. Someone makes these decisions – about what to say and exactly how to say it, and when to switch the invective on and off. There is none of the West's laxity, where (say) an ambitious young speechwriter can come up with his own flord phrase, such as "axis of evil," and see it make history – for better or worse. So we must conclude that whereas in April-May Pyongyang's propagandists saw merit (but what?) in foul insults, since early August they have found virtue in relative restraint. While glad of the latter, it is hard to discern any method or strategy in these linguistic twists and turns.

South Korea mostly showed heroic restraint in the face of such verbal goading, but there was the occasional lapse. On May 12, Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok told reporters: "The North is an abnormal state and should vanish as soon as possible." Pyongyang of course seized the opportunity to seethe with wrath, and Kim retreated. Of course he meant the DPRK government, not the North Korean people whom he wished well. He was just frustrated at the North's adamant denial of responsibility for three UAVs (drones) found crashed in the South in recent weeks, even though Seoul had indisputable evidence of their Northern provenance.

Northern athletes come south for Asiad

On a broader canvas, if mid-2014 began with foul words, it ended with encouraging deeds. Just after this edition of *Comparative Connections* goes to press, the 17th Asian Games (or Asiad) are set to open in Incheon, South Korea on Sept. 19 – with a full team of North Korean athletes participating. Indeed, at this writing the first contingent have already arrived, flying directly into the South's gateway Incheon International Airport on their national carrier Air Koryo, whose livery is a rare sight indeed on the runway at Incheon nowadays – or ever.

So far so good. But getting to this point has been far from smooth, even though – as recorded in past issues of *Comparative Connections* – there is ample precedent, indeed over a decade of experience now on three separate occasions, for DPRK athletes competing in international meetings in the ROK. The first time, like now, was for the Asian Games – the 14th in 2002, when the host was South Korea's second city, Busan. That really was a breakthrough, heady with excitement. A year later the North sent a team to Daegu for the 2003 Universiade (world student games), and again in 2005 to the Asian Athletics Championships, held in Incheon like the upcoming Asiad. This history prompts two general thoughts, both somewhat depressing.

One is déjà vu. The heady days of the Sunshine Era, when all was new and hopeful, are gone. For most South Koreans it is hard now – maybe impossible – to recapture the enthusiasm and optimism that many felt a decade ago. Too much water has flowed under too many bridges, and too much of it has been dirty. Or to change the metaphor to one we have used before in these pages, inter-Korean relations now have come to resemble the board game Snakes and Ladders. These days, any progress – ascending a ladder – is not so much exciting as doubly precarious. Probably the ground being gained is not new, but had been won before – until it was lost by sliding down a big snake. And there is always the risk of more snakes ahead.

The second, more specific, comment is this. Since there is nothing new about North Korean athletes coming South, why have both sides made such heavy weather of it this time? That will be a major focus of the present article, being the quadrimester's main event – even if, strictly, the event is yet to come – and being sadly emblematic of the current state of inter-Korean relations; marred as they are by too much griping and sniping, and (in my view) a worrying lack of strategic vision on both sides. But as always, there were many other inter-Korean stories this past four months which we have no room to discuss in the main article. For an account of these, readers are urged to read the accompanying chronology as well.

There was never much doubt that North Korea wanted to come to Incheon. After some initial ambiguity, *KCNA* reported on May 23 that the DPRK Olympic Committee had officially told the Olympic Council of Asia that North Korea would take part in the Asiad. South Korea welcomed the news. Further hints were dropped by North Korean media. Kim Jong Un was reported as personally offering guidance to both the DPRK men's and women's soccer teams. The North announced that as well as athletes it would, as before, send some 300 cheerleaders – attractive young women, demurely clad (the US model may mislead here), who turned heads on their three previous visits. Not that those were an unalloyed success. An [incident](#) in Daegu, when their

buses screeched to a halt so that the weeping girls could rescue a banner of their Leader, Kim Jong Il, raised by local Southern well-wishers, which was getting wet in the rain – oh, the indignity!, but they didn't bother to rescue the also sodden image of ROK President Kim Dae-jung – attracted widespread negative comment. The rather scary weirdness of DPRK priorities, thus revealed, dampened South Koreans' enthusiasm for the cheerleaders.

Returning to the present, some wider Northern statements addressed to the South over the summer flagged up the Incheon games, including framing them as an opportunity to improve inter-Korean relations overall. However, not until July 17 did the two sides actually get together to discuss the modalities of the North's participation. The meeting did not go well. The North issued a scathing statement denouncing the South for duplicity and insincerity. The South did not publish an official report on what had transpired, but leaks suggested that Seoul had told Pyongyang to follow normal international practice and pay its own way, rather than expect the South to pick up its tab as on previous occasions. If that is true, one may wonder why a government whose avowed slogan is "Trustpolitik" would not simply follow precedent, however annoying it is that North Korea so often expects others to foot its bills.

Thereafter, weeks passed with no more meetings, amid concern that the North might withdraw – though with Pyongyang having publicized Kim Jong Un's personal interest, that would have been a big loss of face. Perhaps there were contacts behind the scenes. Eventually in August the two sides agreed to continue discussions by exchanging letters; a cumbersome method, but it seemed to work. However, bad blood continued. On Aug. 28 the North said it would not after all send cheerleaders, accusing the South of creating various obstacles in July's meeting. Seoul affected surprise and insisted that cheerleaders were welcome, but was then accused of disingenuity – the North said it had conveyed its final decision not to send them a week earlier.

Admittedly this is low-level bickering compared to many past inter-Korean flaming rows, and hopeful it will mar neither the Asiad nor the North's participation. At this writing the North is also not known to have reacted to another controversy. On Sept. 11 the South decided to take down the flags of all 45 competing nations from public display in the streets of Incheon and nearby Goyang, after far-right groups threatened damage to the DPRK flag – flying of which is illegal under the ROK's draconian National Security Law (NSL). The legalities aside – as oft noted, on that basis nearly all inter-Korean dialogue ever has technically broken South Korean law – the North's flag had flown without incident in Busan in 2002, Daegu 2003, and Incheon 2005. Like telling the North to pay its own way (on that front, there are hints that some sort of compromise was eventually reached), capitulation on the flag front looks like a retreat rather than an advance in inter-Korean relations. It also contrasts with the South's readiness on other fronts to deploy massive force; like the thousands of riot police who raided the compound of a church founded by the *Sewol's* owner, and who continue to encircle protesting but peaceful bereaved relatives of the tragedy's victims in downtown Seoul. A far more modest show of strength – two policemen per DPRK flag? – would surely have nipped this in the bud.

Offers and rebuffs: the North's McEnroe move

The Asiad apart, the two Koreas achieved little concrete during the past four months. This was not for want of trying, at least on the South's side. During this period Seoul proffered at least

three separate (albeit inter-related) initiatives. One was to hold a fresh round of reunions of separated families around the Chuseok holiday, Korea's harvest festival which this year fell on Sept. 8. This did not happen. In August, the South also suggested unconditional high-level talks, to discuss family reunions plus whatever agenda the North wants, as a follow-up to the round held – with scant result – in February. Here too the North has made no formal response.

North Korea too made an offer, but not really. The National Defense Commission (NDC)'s 'special proposal' of June 30 might be called a John McEnroe offer – something to which the only possible response is the former tennis champion's famous catchphrase: "You cannot be serious!" Like the so-called Open Questionnaire method which the DPRK also favors – it has sent at least three to President Park, most recently on April 23 – this is more about rhetorical point-scoring than any real will to negotiate. Yet again, one wonders what the point of this is. Why do they bother? Who do they suppose is listening or interested, much less impressed?

The NDC's long document contains just one reasonable idea: that both sides should reaffirm all previous North-South statements and agreements. Yet the very next paragraph sticks the knife in, urging "the south Korean authorities" to "totally abolish all cooperation mechanisms violating the interests of the fellow countrymen." As is made clear, that means the ROK-US alliance and all it entails, like routine annual joint military exercises. A peroration telling the South to "resolutely break with the inglorious past" cannot be a serious offer to negotiate.

Yet Pyongyang can be more positive when it chooses, or at least engage in serious discussion. On Aug. 15 – Liberation Day (from Japan in 1945), a holiday in both Koreas – both sides made proposals. President Park offered what was mostly a reprise of themes in her Dresden Declaration in March, discussed in our last issue. This time she sounded an environmental note by suggesting cross-border river and forest management projects, and inviting the North to an upcoming conference on biodiversity to be held in Pyeongchang in October. The latter is a UN conference – a jamboree really, with 20,000 attendees expected from 193 countries – so the DPRK as a UN member is surely entitled to be there in any case. At this writing it was not known whether North Korea plans to attend. In a different vein, Park suggested joint cultural events to mark the 70th anniversary in 2015 of Korea's liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. Japan-bashing always goes down well in both Koreas, but this proposal may put the North in an awkward spot in view of the recent tentative Tokyo-Pyongyang rapprochement.

President Park also mentioned aid for Northern infrastructure, but in the context of villages, in keeping with her overall ecological and grassroots theme. A few days later, though, Seoul let it be known that much larger projects are potentially on offer. On Aug. 18 the Unification Ministry (MOU) submitted its 2014 policy plan to the ROK National Assembly. This includes joint flood prevention on the Imjin River, again echoing the president. But it goes far further in also contemplating two major repair and renovation works – of the main road from Kaesong to Pyongyang, and the railway all the way up to Sinuiju – i.e., the entire length of the DPRK.

If that sounds like an offer North Korea cannot refuse, think again. The Party daily *Rodong Sinmun* was quick to comment on the speech by "South Korea's chief executive" – that term at least was polite – calling it "old-fashioned, tedious" and "incoherent." They went on, "She talked much about 'environment, public welfare and cultural progress,' something far out of [sic] the

most urgent problems.” That seems a fair comment. As with Park’s pet project of a peace park in the DMZ – something she persists with, despite Pyongyang never having shown the slightest interest – one may question whether on the inter-Korean front her government has got its priorities right. In part, this reprises a longstanding divide between the two Koreas on how to move forward. The South often prefers to start small and work up, whereas in the North’s the big picture and overall framework need to be settled first; the details can follow.

Common ground?

North Korea too marked Aug. 15, with a statement by its Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea. Belying its name, the CPRK’s utterances are often anything but peaceful. This one had its share of boilerplate, calling for withdrawal of US forces, and even reiterating Pyongyang’s corniest and decades-old demand – that the South must pull down a “concrete wall” alleged to divide the peninsula, but which doesn’t actually exist.

More reasonable was CPRK’s call, echoing that of the NDC, for full implementation of all prior North-South agreements. They also complained about regime change – meaning, this time, not any hostile plans others might have against the North, but the South “peddling (sic) anything frequently whenever the regime is replaced by another.” Presumably they meant back-pedaling, and here too they have a point. As covered extensively in this journal at the time, Park’s hard-right predecessor Lee Myung-bak in effect reneged on a range of planned new economic cooperation projects which his own liberal predecessor, Roh Moo-hyun, had agreed with Kim Jong Il at 2007’s second inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang, by making these conditional – as they had not been – on the North’s prior nuclear disarmament. After that experience, Pyongyang must be frustrated with and perhaps bemused by a problem unknown in its own tightly controlled system: democracy and all its vagaries.

But one sentence in the CPRK statement stood out, at least to this reader; though it seems not to have attracted the attention in Seoul that it was surely intended to. Ponder this: “The humanitarian work, the rejoining of railways and roads and social cooperation called for by the south Korean authorities will be satisfactorily settled if the June 15 joint declaration and the October 4 declaration are implemented as they are reflected in those declarations.”

Since this was published a few days before MOU announced its specific ideas on Northern infrastructure, the reference here is to President Park’s Dresden speech – which at the time the North dismissed out of hand. Now, though, Pyongyang is surely making a concrete suggestion about how the two sides’ ostensibly different agendas overlap and could be reconciled. Seoul has many skilled officials whose job is to parse every Northern statement and move minutely. It is hard to believe they have missed this one. Yet I am not aware of any response as yet.

Where then do inter-Korean relations stand as summer turns to fall, the most beautiful season (in my view) on the peninsula? They could go either way. Provided both sides are so minded and stay consistent in that resolve, the sentence quoted above shows a potential way forward.

Yet I fear this could equally become one more road not taken. As ever, most of the blame lies with the North. Its constant drumbeat of bellicose rhetoric and especially foul language in late

spring; the repeated volleys of missiles fired into the East Sea/Sea of Japan, usually with no warning; and of course its continued nuclear defiance; it goes without saying that none of this encourages South Korea or anyone else to regard North Korea as a serious or trustworthy dialogue partner who truly desires peace and reconciliation. Ignoring the South's open-ended offer of further high-level talks is also perverse, as well as rude.

And yet the South is not wholly blameless. As discussed in previous issues of *Comparative Connections*, Park Geun-hye's administration has made some false moves and questionable choices. And as outlined above, this pattern and puzzle are continuing. Why not just pay for the North's team and its cheerleaders, as previous ROK governments did? And why cave in to extremist threats and take down all public flags around the Asiad – the other 43 competing nations, caught in this Korean crossfire, won't appreciate that either – when a decade ago the DPRK flag flew at such sporting events without incident? It is hard to see how either of these petty decisions advances Park's "Trustpolitik" or helps to take inter-Korean relations forward.

This is in addition to other questions that are becoming quite widely raised in South Korea, including by some conservatives. How long will Seoul maintain the "May 24 measures" – the sanctions imposed on that date in 2010 in reprisal for the sinking of the corvette *Cheonan* (which Pyongyang persists in denying responsibility for), banning all trade with or investment in the DPRK except the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC)? Frustrating as the North's denial is, what purpose does the ban serve – except to help China extend its own economic influence in North Korea? Similarly, is it not time to end the now six-year old suspension of Southern tours to the North's Mount Kumgang resort, a measure that has all but bankrupted Hyundai Asan, which ran the tours and has investments in hotels and other facilities worth some \$300 million moldering away there (indeed, formally confiscated now by the DPRK)?

A wider question, broached in the last issue of *Comparative Connections*, is: what does the North make of President Park's interest in planning for reunification? The new advisory committee, which she announced in February, was named in July and held its first meeting in August. This and some other measures appear to be conceived as domestic and unilateral, rather than any kind of partnership. Viewed from Pyongyang, that must surely be unnerving.

I still wonder whether either Park Geun-hye or Kim Jong Un has got the other's measure yet, or is thinking strategically. Kim has all the time in the world – aged barely 30, he could still be in power in 2064. Democracy on the other hand imposes strict time limits, especially in South Korea where presidents only serve a single five-year term. Park has already used up almost a third of hers. With less than three and a half years left, the clock is starting to tick.

Still, Korea's political weather can change in a trice. If all goes to plan, one of the four flights that will shortly bring the rest of the North's team South for the Asiad is set to include the DPRK's newly appointed sports minister, Kim Yong Hun. That will make Kim, who is said to be close to Kim Jong Un, the most senior Northern figure to visit South Korea since 2009. It is not clear yet whom he will meet or how long he will stay. But much may be riding on what he says and does – and equally, on how South Korea treats him. May the Games commence – and may North-South relations be among the winners.

Chronology of North Korea-South Korea Relations May – August 2014

May 1, 2014: Pyongyang's *official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* confirms what Seoul had already surmised. Choe Ryong Hae has been replaced in the key post of political director of the Korean People's Army (KPA) political director by Vice Marshal Hwang Pyong So. Both men in fact had civilian backgrounds and careers in the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK); Hwang only donned the uniform in 2011.

May 2, 2014: KCNA again [insults](#) ROK President Park Geun-hye: "All Koreans are spitting on her as she is resorting to whorish and disgusting political prostitution only after leaving her soul or chastity violated at such old age of over 60." It also refers to "her American master reminiscent of a wicked black monkey". (Even more blatant and disgusting [racism](#) against President Obama appears at length in another *KCNA* article, published in [Korean](#) only.)

May 3, 2014: *Rodong Sinmun* [thunders](#): "The [South Korean] puppet authorities' moves to exchange military information with Japan are an unpardonable treacherous crime stunning the world in their danger, point of time and method." Similarly, on May 7 a *KCNA* commentary, as its own [headline](#) puts it, "Assails [the] Criminal Nexus Among S. Korea, U.S., Japan."

May 6, 2014: *KCNA* [commentary](#) on April 16 *Sewol* ferry disaster, in which 304 died, is headlined, "Park Geun Hye Is Wholly to Blame for Sinking of Ferry." It calls her "a depraved old lady who has neither human ethics nor conscience and the worst traitor and sycophant."

May 7, 2014: Poll taken late last year, but only published now, [finds](#) almost half (44.3 percent) of South Koreans unwilling to pay a cent toward unification – 31.9 percent would fork out \$50 a year, and 11.7 percent up to \$100. Only 1.2 percent would contribute over \$1,000.

May 7, 2014: Chairing a UN Security Council debate on weapons of mass destruction, ROK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Paik Ji-ah [cuts off](#) the microphone of DPRK Deputy Ambassador Ri Tong Il after he ignores two warnings and extends his allotted four minutes to 10.

May 8, 2014: South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin [says](#) the North has made all its preparations for a fourth nuclear test, to be carried out "whenever it makes a decision." In the event no such test takes place during the ensuing four months.

May 8, 2014: WPK daily paper *Rodong Sinmun* [condemns](#) Park Geun-hye's "Doctrine of Gaining Great Opportunity of Unification" (presumably this is bonanza, *daebak*) as a "strange watchword ... fully reflect[ing] the base and ugly nature of philistinism [and] mammonism."

May 8, 2014: ROK Defense Ministry (MND) [says](#) that after restoring the geographical positioning system (GPS) coordinates stored in the three unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) found near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in March and April, it now has the "smoking gun" that proves that they were all launched from the DPRK.

May 12, 2014: MND spokesman Kim Min-seok [tells](#) a press briefing on Seoul: “The North is an abnormal state and should vanish as soon as possible.” The National Defence Commission (NDC), the DPRK’s topmost executive organ, ripostes next day: “All [our] service personnel and people ... are strongly calling for wiping the Park group out of this land.”

May 13, 2014: South Korea’s Unification Ministry (MOU) [reveals](#) that in March it fined a businessman 1 million won (\$977) for an unauthorized meeting with North Koreans in China last December. They discussed possible Southern participation in a project to build a high-speed railway and parallel highway the length of the DPRK, from Sinuiju to Kaesong.

May 19, 2014: DPRK’s Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) [denounces](#) ROK President Park Geun-hye’s apology for April’s *Sewol* ferry disaster. CPRK calls the accident “an unprecedented deliberate murder and a massacre perpetrated by ... the Park group.”

May 21, 2014: Citing currently negative inter-Korean relations, Seoul [rejects](#) Pyongyang’s proposal that they jointly mark the anniversary of the first North-South summit in June.

May 21, 2014: At a conference in Shanghai, ROK Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae [warns](#) the DPRK not to conduct a fresh unclear test, but promises support should it opt to disarm.

May 21, 2014: ROK’s Cardinal Andres Yeom Soo-jung [visits](#) the joint venture Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC): the first ever visit to North Korea by a Roman Catholic cardinal.

May 21, 2014: *KCNA* report, [headlined](#) “KPA Will Wipe out Park Geun Hye-led Military Hooligans to Last One: Command of Southwestern Front of KPA,” accuses the ROK Navy of “firing at random at the warships of the Korean People’s Army which were on regular guard duty in the southwestern waters of the DPRK side and peaceable Chinese fishing boats.”

May 22, 2014: South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) [say](#) North Korea fired two artillery rounds toward an ROK warship in the West (Yellow) Sea, hence the South returned fire. The North denies this. Each side [threatens](#) “merciless punishment” if the other provokes it.

May 23, 2014: *KCNA* [reports](#) that the DPRK Olympic Committee has officially informed the Olympic Council of Asia that North Korea will participate in the 17th Asian Games (Asiad) in Incheon, ROK between Sept. 19 and Oct. 4. South Korea welcomes the news.

May 23, 2014: Talking to reporters in Seoul after her first visit to North Korea on May 19-21, Ertharin Cousin, executive director of the UN World Food Program, [says](#) WFP’s nutrition program for DPRK children and pregnant women stands at a “very crucial juncture.” WFP aid to North Korea fell from \$86.94 million in 2012 to \$26.56 million in 2013.

May 25, 2014: *KCNA* [quotes](#) the ‘Federation of Korean Economic Workers in China’ on Park Geun-hye: “Such prostitute, special-class traitor has to be eliminated at an early date ... it is not possible to expect anything as long as the venomous serpent remains in Chongwadae.”

May 25, 2014: *Yonhap* [quotes](#) ‘ROK officials’ as saying that representatives of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea and Archdiocese of Seoul met members of the DPRK Catholic Church in Shenyang, China, on May 18-19, inviting them to attend a mass to be celebrated by Pope Francis in Seoul in August. In the event no Northern Catholics come South for this.

May 26, 2014: *Yonhap* [headlines](#) a meeting in Seoul of the ROK and PRC foreign ministers as “S. Korea, China agree to deter N. Korea’s nuke ambitions.” The actual report has China’s Wang Yi calling for resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

May 27, 2014: *KCNA* [names](#) Kim Yong Hun as minister of physical culture and sports in place of Ri Jong Mu, who has served since 2012. Kim is close to leader Kim Jong Un.

May 27, 2014: *KCNA* [quotes](#) a KPA call for the US to stop “hostile acts seriously rattling the nerves of the other side.” This refers to a steel tower erected at Panmunjom for surveillance purposes. USFK retorts that it had notified the North, which already has its own similar tower.

May 28, 2014: *Rodong Sinmun* [avers](#) that “Nothing will be resolved in inter-Korean relations as long as Park [Geun-hye] remains [in power],” and demands an end to her rule.

May 29, 2014: South Korea’s Foreign Ministry (MOFA) [says](#) it has agreed to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) opening a field office in South Korea to monitor human rights abuses in North Korea.

May 29, 2014: A day after allocating 632 million won (US\$619,000) for research on the idea of a peace park in the DMZ, MOU [says](#) it will ask researchers to produce reports on how to accomplish this project – even though North Korea has rejected it.

May 30, 2014: In Seoul, President Park meets and [thanks](#) Justice Michael Kirby, the retired Australian judge who chaired the UN inquiry on DPRK human rights abuses.

May 31, 2014: *Yonhap* [quotes](#) “military sources” as saying that North Korea has been issuing fishing rights to Chinese vessels in the West Sea which include waters that are actually South Korea’s. China has been notified, and warned not to cross the Northern Limit Line (NLL).

June 1, 2014: President Park [appoints](#) Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin as her national security adviser, replacing Kim Jang-soo who resigned May 22. Kim KJ’s successor at MND is ex-JCS Chairman Han Min-koo. Pyongyang media [denounce](#) Kim as a “special-class criminal ... hooligan ... diehard pro-US lackey ... worst traitor ... special-class stooge of the US ... wicked confrontation maniac” and more.

June 3, 2014: MOU [suggests](#) that Hwang Pyong So (see May 1) may now be a vice-chairman of the WPK’s powerful Central Military Commission (CMC). It does not cite its evidence.

June 3, 2014: USFK Commander Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti [tells](#) a Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA, MND’s think-tank) forum that the US is considering deploying a Terminal

High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense (MD) battery in South Korea so as to counter the North's growing missile threats, and that he has personally recommended this.

June 3, 2014: South Korea [returns](#) a Northern fisherman via Panmunjom, but not his two colleagues who asked to remain in the South. Pyongyang had demanded all three back. Their boat was found adrift with engine trouble near Ulleung-do in the East Sea three days earlier.

June 9, 2014: North Korea's CPRK [denounces](#) UN-OHCHR's plan to open an office in Seoul monitoring North Korean human rights as "a hideous politically-motivated provocation" and "a serious hostile act." CPRK warns: "We will strongly react against it. Needless to say, the 'office' and its staff are not excepted from being targets of this action." Earlier, on June 4, *Rodong Sinmun* [accused](#) the South of allowing this office in order to "worsen confrontation between the brother countries and achieve its ambition of forcible reunification."

June 26, 2014: *KCNA* quotes the General Association of Koreans in China as marking the anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 by [denouncing](#) "the Park Geun Hye group of traitors [as] the sycophant and quisling without an equal in the world".

July 7, 2014: North Korea [says](#) that it will send cheerleaders as well as athletes to the Incheon Asiad, to "melt the frozen North-South relations with the heat of national reconciliation."

July 15, 2014: South Korea formally [launches](#) its new Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation (PCUP). Its 50 members comprise 30 private sector experts, two lawmakers, 11 government officials and six heads of state research institutes. President Park will chair it.

July 17, 2014: North and South hold talks at Panmunjom on details of DPRK participation in the Asiad. Next day *KCNA* [accuses](#) Seoul of "provocations" on various issues, including cheerleaders, and threatens to "fundamentally reexamine its participation in the games."

July 22, 2014: A 38-strong team from the three companies – KoRail, Posco and Hyundai Merchant Marine – plus ROK government officials [returns](#) from a week-long site visit, their second, to the DPRK's Rajin port. They report that Pyongyang is "pleased" that this consortium may invest in Rajin by buying half of Russian Railways' 70 percent stake in a joint venture with North Korea to modernize rail and port facilities.

July 23, 2014: Noting that "Marshal Kim Jong Un personally guided a match for examining the men's football of the National Sports Team to take part in the 17th Asian Games," CPRK [urges](#) South Korea not to miss this opportunity to improve North-South relations."

Aug. 7, 2014: The ROK PCUP [holds](#) its first meeting. Critics [complain](#) that it only discusses "hot air" abstract topics, not immediate issues such as whether to ease sanctions.

Aug. 11, 2014: South Korea proposes high-level talks at Panmunjom on Aug. 19. Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae says: "We want to discuss family reunions and other pending inter-Korean issues in a comprehensive manner." He adds that the North may raise any agenda it

wishes, including the South's "May 24" sanctions imposed in 2010. No reply is received by Aug. 19, or indeed thereafter.

Aug. 14, 2014: In a [statement](#) ahead of Liberation Day (from Japan in 1945: a holiday in both Koreas), the North's DPRK urges the South to end hostile acts, terminate US "interference," and "take practical steps to implement the already agreed north-south agreements."

Aug. 14, 2014: Incheon Asiad organisers [say](#) the DPRK has duly submitted the names of 150 athletes in 14 sports plus 202 coaches, referees, and staff, confirming its participation despite July's row and no subsequent meetings with the South. There is no mention of cheerleaders.

Aug. 14, 2014: A North Korean father and son [swim](#) to the South's Gyodong Island in the West/Yellow Sea, just south of the NLL and 1.5 miles from the DPRK coast. Though rare, this is the third successive year that defectors have succeeded in escaping by swimming.

Aug. 15, 2014: In her Liberation Day speech, ROK President Park [offers](#) the North a range of cooperative projects. Some reprise offers made in her Dresden Declaration in March.

Aug. 15, 2014: In an unscripted comment, Pope Francis during a week-long visit to South Korea [tells](#) a questioner in Seoul: "Think of your brothers in the North. They speak the same language as you, and when in a family the same language is spoken, there is a human hope."

Aug. 16, 2014: In a rare privilege, both Koreas allow 32 ethnic Koreans from countries of the former Soviet Union to [drive](#) their convoy of five SUVs across the DMZ from North to South. The 10,000 mile journey to mark 150 years of Korean emigration to Russia began in Moscow on July 7; they entered the DPRK via Rajin on Aug. 8. Their odyssey ends with participation in a Mass for peace and reconciliation in Seoul, celebrated by Pope Francis. Vasily Cho, the group's leader, says they hope that this venture will help improve inter-Korean relations.

Aug. 17, 2014: Kim Jong Un [sends](#) a wreath and telegram on the fourth anniversary of the death of Kim Dae-jung. This is delivered to Kim's son in Kaesong by Kim Yang Gon, who as head of the United Front Department of the WPK is Pyongyang's top point man on the South.

Aug. 18, 2014: Presenting MOU's 2014 policy plan to the National Assembly's diplomatic affairs committee, ROK Unification Minister Ryoo reiterates that "it is difficult to imagine the government unilaterally lifting" sanctions against North Korea. "If (Pyongyang) needs the May 24 sanctions to be removed, it should come to the negotiating table and discuss it there." He also calls on the North to accept the South's offer of high-level talks.

Aug. 18, 2014: *Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG)*, the annual US-ROK military exercise, begins. 50,000 ROK and 30,000 US forces participate, plus troops from 10 other nations. North Korea as usual denounces this as an invasion plan and [threatens](#) pre-emptive strikes.

Aug. 19, 2014: *Rodong Sinmun* [thunders](#): "We have already declared solemnly that all the aggressor forces to be involved in the UFG, military bases in south Korea and overseas, White House, Pentagon, Chongwadae and other bases of aggression and provocation would become the

targets of the strategic and tactical rockets and other high-performance ultra-modern ultra-precision fire strike means of the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK.”

Aug. 19, 2014: Ryang Song Ho, dean of Pyongyang College of Physical Education, [flies](#) into Incheon International Airport heading an eight-strong DPRK delegation, which takes part in the Asiad group draw next day. Speaking at a conference in Incheon, Ryang praises Kim Jong Un for building “thousands of multifunctional sports facilities and sports parks” and other “facilities which embody the civilisation of the new era” like the new Masikryong ski resort.

Aug. 20-21, 2014: David Cohen, who as US Treasury under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence oversees sanctions against North Korea, [visits](#) Seoul for consultations.

Aug. 22, 2014: MOU [says](#) it will start building a genetic database of families separated by the Korean War. It will also start filming 10-minute family messages to be sent to relatives in the North. Pyongyang is not known to have agreed to such messages.

Aug. 26, 2014: The South [sends](#) a letter to the North regarding its Asiad participation. This is not published, but reportedly its contents include permission for the DPRK team to arrive by direct flight from Pyongyang, and offers of administrative and other support.

Aug. 26, 2014: The Korean Broadcasters Association (KBA), whose council comprises the ROK’s three major broadcasters (*KBS*, *MBC* and *SBS*), [says](#) it will offer North Korea rights to broadcast the Asian Games for free “in accordance with humanitarianism and sports spirit.”

Aug. 26, 2014: *JoongAng Ilbo* [cites](#) MOU as saying that currently less than 3 percent of KIC output is exported beyond the peninsula. In 2010 the proportion was 11.3 percent.

Aug. 27, 2014: Yoo Ki-june, an influential lawmaker of the South’s ruling Saenuri Party who chairs the ROK National Assembly’s foreign affairs committee, [urges](#) the lifting of sanctions against North Korea and the resumption of tourism to the North’s Mount Kumgang resort “for reduction of tension and dialogue between the two Koreas.”

Aug. 28, 2014: *JoongAng Ilbo* [reports](#) a survey of 116,000 school pupils. 1 in 4 view North Korea as a foe, and 1 in 5 see unification as unnecessary (53.5 percent disagree).

Aug. 28, 2014: ROK Supreme Court [upholds](#) an appeal court ruling acquitting Park Jong-geun, 26, of violating the NSL by retweeting North Korean materials; accepting his defense that his purpose had been to ridicule the DPRK. His original trial in Suwon in 2012 had found him guilty and imposed a 10-month jail term, suspended for two years.

Aug. 28, 2014: Son Kwang Ho, vice-chairman of the DPRK National Olympic Committee, [tells](#) the North’s *Korean Central Television (KCTV)* that no cheerleading squad will be sent to the Incheon Asiad after all. Blaming the South for calling the cheerleaders subversives and taking issue with the group’s size and cost, he says Seoul was informed of this decision last week. MOU belatedly confirms that the North did indeed convey that message.

Aug. 29, 2014: Daum, a leading South Korean web portal, [publishes](#) high-resolution views and maps of almost all North Korea except areas near the DMZ. For security reasons the very latest data available to the ROK government is not used. Daum's product is described as far more comprehensive in its coverage than Google Maps, though the latter is more up to date.

Aug. 29, 2014: MOU spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol [says](#), "It's very regrettable that North Korea unilaterally announced plans not to send cheerleaders [to the Incheon Asian Games], making a distorted claim that we do not want their participation."

Aug. 30, 2014: North Korea's Olympic Committee [repeats](#) its claim that the South is being disingenuous on the cheerleader issue.

Sept. 1, 2014: MOU spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol [reiterates](#) that "there is no change in the government's basic position with regard to the May 24th Measures", meaning sanctions will remain unless North Korea formally apologizes for sinking the *Cheonan* in 2010. He hopes nonetheless that the North will agree to family reunions "before it gets too cold."

Sept. 2, 2014: An MOU spokesman [says](#) the South will share the cost of the North's taking part in the Asian Games, and that the gap between the two sides on who pays what is "not wide." No figures are given. He reiterates that the North is welcome to bring cheerleaders.

Sept. 3, 2014: MOU and two other ROK Ministries, Justice (MOJ) and Security and Public Administration (MOSPA), jointly launch an integrated database on legal issues likely to arise during and after Korea's reunification. It can be found at www.unilaw.go.kr. (Korean only)

Sept. 11, 2014: The first group of North Korean participants in the Asian Games [flies](#) directly from Pyongyang aboard the DPRK national airline Air Koryo, landing at Incheon International Airport (IIA). This 94-strong group includes Vice Sports Minister Jang Su Myong and 38 soccer players (20 male, 18 female); the soccer tournament begins ahead of the Asiad's official opening on Sept. 19. The rest of the North's 273-strong contingent will come in four further batches, including Sports Minister Kim Yong Hun: scheduled to arrive Sept. 14, he will be the most senior Northern official to visit the South since 2009.

Sept. 11, 2014: MOU [confirms](#) a decision by the Asiad organizers to remove flags of all 45 competing nations from public streets, after rightwing groups threaten violence against the DPRK flag – whose display is illegal under the ROK's National Security Law. A day later it [adds](#) that Southern spectators will not be allowed to fly the Northern flag in stadiums, either.