

# COMPARATIVE

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**NORTH KOREA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS**

## INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT: THIRD TIME LUCKY?

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It is a new year and there is new hope for inter-Korean relations. Beginning with Kim Jong Un's olive branch to Seoul in his annual New Year Address, followed by the carefully coordinated display of North-South cooperation at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, and capped off with the sometimes unctuous display of bonhomie at the inter-Korean summit in Panmunjom, the shift has been stunning. Now comes the hard part: implementation. The product of the summit, the Panmunjom Declaration, lays out clear milestones to mark progress for improving inter-Korean relations. We expect the North this time to deliver with the South, as a ploy to help it postpone or spin out denuclearization. How these two diplomatic tracks – local and multifaceted on the peninsula, but single-mindedly nuclear on the global stage and especially in Washington – will play out and interact is the key issue.

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## A new era?

2018 has begun well for inter-Korean relations. (It feels like a long time since it was possible to write those words.) Our last Update was just in time, fortunately, to cover Kim Jong Un's striking U-turn in his annual New Year Address. Having until then somewhat surprisingly cold-shouldered South Korea's new left-leaning – and strongly pro-'sunshine' – President Moon Jae-in, elected in May 2017 after the impeachment of his predecessor Park Geun-hye, North Korea's young leader abruptly changed tack and extended an olive branch. Not only did Kim wish the South well as host of the then-upcoming Winter Olympic Games, he self-invited the North to join the party at Pyeongchang.

Fortuitously – rarely do events dovetail so neatly with *Comparative Connections*' deadlines – we were able to discuss in some detail the Northern turn in our last issue, though it was then very new and to hazard some predictions on how it might turn out. Now we can report that all this sudden new inter-Korean icing on the South's Olympic cake – much of it extraneous (concerts, taekwondo displays and so on) rather than part of the Games as such – turned out very much as planned, even if the resulting confection was a bit top-heavy.

Put another way, Pyongyang stole the PyeongChang show. Punning wags (or critics) in South Korea even dubbed the games the '[Pyeongyang Olympics](#).' An event that would otherwise have been mainly confined to the sports pages instead made headline news worldwide, thanks to the North's participation – which for many media became the main story. Most global comment echoed local reaction: relief that a shadow over the Games had been lifted, and hopes that this new thaw on the peninsula might prove more enduring.

On that score, our forecast tended to pessimism: "enjoy this pause while it lasts," we concluded last time. Regarding long-term prospects we remain cautious, as is only prudent. Readers who have been with us throughout the century – *Comparative Connections*' coverage of inter-Korean relations began in 2001, soon after the first North-South summit – need no reminding that this has been, and remains, a long, winding, rocky road. So often before, hopes of progress on the peninsula have been raised –

only to be later dashed. (Later we briefly review those ups and downs.)

Given this history, we would not serve our readers well by simply and uncritically celebrating the new turn in Korea. We are glad of it, of course; who could not be? For sure, the peninsula is in a better place, with a positive and often startling frenzy of many-sided summit diplomacy in full spate, than all the tensions, WMD tests, and trans-Pacific name-calling that marred much of 2017. We very much hope that a new, durable peace process is under way. But the task, a tricky one, is to balance hope and expectation – and to learn from the past.

On the hope side, clearly this is already more than a mere pause in tensions for the Olympics. That was just a starting-point. Further North-South meetings soon followed, both substantial (high-level talks, mainly in Pyongyang) and symbolic – like the ironic sight of Kim Jong Un and a select Northern audience enjoying a concert of Southern K-pop, normally banned in North Korea. This climaxed, of course, in the third inter-Korean summit held on April 27, and the encouragingly specific Panmunjom Declaration, which that remarkable meeting issued.

## Two cheers, two caveats

All this is analyzed in more detail below. If for now we offer only two cheers rather than the full three, this is for two distinct reasons. One, already mentioned, is past disappointment. The second is new, and key. Whatever progress the two Koreas may now make on their own – and for sure, the purely bilateral agenda between them is big enough – cannot resolve the wider North Korea question, which thanks to Kim Jong Un's vigorous WMD testing has become global rather than local. Beyond peninsular issues, what the world – more specifically the West – demands is the DPRK's denuclearization. On this, the Panmunjom Declaration had very little to say. As discussed in the US-Korea section of this issue of *Comparative Connections*, a *sine qua non* for the success of the forthcoming (if still hard to imagine) Kim-Trump summit, or maybe even a precondition for it to happen at all, is for Pyongyang to come up with far more substantial offers regarding denuclearization than any it has produced so far.

While nuclear knots are beyond our scope, we would be remiss not to 'think the link' we are

positing between the local and global dimensions of the North Korea question. Here is our take. We expect the inter-Korean dimension to go well. Not that Kim Jong Un has undergone a Damascene conversion to brotherly love, but because the young tyrant whom our tabloid media love to mock (more fool they) turns out to be a master tactician and cunning strategist. His aim now is to build a substantial-seeming peninsular peace process, such that South Korea will join China and Russia in urging the US to be patient on the nuclear front.

In short, our bet is that Kim is making nice with Moon as a ploy to hold onto his nukes. Lest this sound cynical, we would be delighted to be proven wrong. If, on the contrary, bromance blooms between Trump and Kim, such that the latter 'does a Libya' (as John Bolton, with his customary tact and sensitivity, is urging) and hands over his entire WMD arsenal, we would be over the moon – and pigs might fly. There is just a chance that Kim Jong Un really does want North Korea to change its ways, and his interlocutors must never close that door. But if so, this will be a lengthy and delicate process. More probable, surely, is that the latest young Kim, pitched into running the family business, has had a swift learning curve and is adeptly playing his father and grandfather's old games, using their playbook. As ever, time will tell.

### The 'Pyongyang Olympics'

Readers of *Comparative Connections* are by definition a select band of specialists. If you are interested enough in Korea to be reading this, then you probably followed the PyeongChang Olympics – for the politics – in February, and were glued to the TV on April 27. For that reason our account here will be mainly analytical, leaving the narrative to the chronology.

As regards the Olympics, the two Koreas fulfilled the agenda they had agreed on Jan. 9 (as detailed in our last issue). Their athletes duly paraded jointly in the stadium at PyeongChang behind a unification flag, as they had done at several previous Olympics in the past. Besides sport, which was hardly the main point, the North as planned sent a song and dance troupe, a taekwondo team, the inevitable cheerleaders, and a high-level delegation. Those who recall the 'sunshine' era (1998-2007), amply chronicled in past issues of this journal, have seen all this before. But it was good to see it again, and almost everything went smoothly.

Two aspects of this first phase of – reconnecting, shall we call it? – stand out. The unified women's ice hockey squad (this apart, the two Koreas competed separately) was new. There had been one-off joint teams before in table tennis and soccer, back in 1991. But now it was on Korean soil, and provoked interesting reactions – some negative, at first. After the joint team was announced, Moon Jae-in's approval ratings [fell](#) by 6 points to a four-month low of 67 percent (still pretty high). Under-40s, Moon's main support base, were especially peeved.

Why? Recent research has shown, perhaps unsurprisingly, that while many older Koreans still yearn for reunification, for the young the 'Korea' they root for is their actual country, all they have ever known: Taehan Minguk, the Republic of Korea. North Korea, whatever else it is, is someplace else. Hence they bridled at having foreigners – albeit fellow-Koreans – foisted on Team ROK for political ends. Here a non-Korean, closely involved, offers valuable insights. South Korea's Canadian [coach](#), Sarah Murray, [spoke](#) frankly to *Yonhap* about the "damage" she feared this would cause to her team: the difficult chemistry of having to meld at short notice with total strangers, and the likelihood that some Southern players would have to give up their spots in the squad. "I am kind of shocked this happened so close to the Olympics,"

Yet like a true pro, Murray buckled down. There were hurdles indeed, [linguistic](#) not least. Joint training meant making a three-way list of hockey terms: the North uses a quite different vocabulary, rejecting English words. But they persevered, and got on, although no medals were won, nor expected. By mid-February, despite her initial misgivings, Murray [said](#) the joint team had bonded "like a family"; she expected to cry when the Northern girls went home. In mid-March she was still [pining](#), "We just miss practicing with them. They brought a different level of intensity to practice and it was just fun to have them around." Murray also noted how the joint team had helped to raise the hitherto low profile of women's ice hockey in South Korea.

Like coach Murray, South Korean public opinion rallied too. Both the Games as such and the attendant inter-Korean razzmatazz were deemed a success. Yet Moon's government must not forget that first reaction against the joint

team idea. It may well be repeated, if the Panmunjom Declaration's clause 1.4 is fully implemented. This grandiosely proclaims that "the two sides agreed to demonstrate their collective wisdom, talents, and solidarity by jointly participating in international sports events such as the 2018 Asian Games."

Will wisdom, talents and solidarity trump – pardon the verb – rivalry, jealousy, and mistrust? This may depend on whether international sports bodies will bend the rules to allow a unified Korea to field larger squads, which is unfair to other countries (as Switzerland [protested](#) a propos the ice hockey in PyeongChang; still, they went on to [thrash](#) Korea 8-0). Otherwise, if the price of unity is South Korean athletes losing team spots to probably less talented Northerners, a degree of backlash in the South seems inevitable.

The bigger question is how far these dilemmas pertain more widely. For Moon and his '[386 generation](#),' 'Korea' means the entire peninsula and reunification is a sacred goal. But those radicals are aging now. Can they persuade more [skeptical](#) younger cohorts to buy into the old dream? Much hinges on how the nascent new peace process turns out.

### Kim's women: soft power?

A second noteworthy feature of the new détente is Kim Jong Un's women. In a peninsula still strongly patriarchal on both sides of the DMZ, but especially in the North, it was striking that two of the North's new envoys to the South were female. Despite how different the DPRK's own wooden media are, Kim evidently has a good grasp of what plays well outside his realm, given what Pyongyang sometimes calls "the reptile press" under sensation-hungry capitalism.

Enter Hyon Song Wol. As I [wrote](#) elsewhere, "In fur stole and stiletto boots – not an everyday North Korean look – Hyon ... was quite the diva as she led her team into enemy territory. She smiled, but did not speak to the Seoul press scrum eager to glimpse Pyongyang's most famous – or notorious – cultural export." Our last issue gave more background on Hyon, who attracted huge interest when she came south in late January to inspect venues in PyeongChang and Seoul where the DPRK's Samjiyon orchestra and art troupe were to perform, as they duly [did](#). (*Korea Herald* has a useful [article](#) on the politics of cultural repertoire choices – and why

Seohyun of Girls' Generation was the obvious pick to join the visitors on stage for the finale.)



*1*North Korean cultural manager Hyon Song Wol (*The National*)

Her glamor aside, Hyon is evidently very able, having risen from a performer to become the DPRK's top cultural manager, and since last year a member of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK CC). More powerful still – for ascriptive reasons in the first instance, but clearly talented too – is Kim Jong Un's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong. Aged just 30, she is already an alternate Politburo member of the WPK Central Committee. South Koreans saw her twice in recent months, first as part of the high-level Northern delegation, which flew South – in Kim Jong Un's personal aircraft *Chanmae-1*, an *Ilyushin-62* – for the Olympic opening ceremony. They were nominally headed by the DPRK's titular head of state, the indefatigable survivor Kim Yong Nam, who has traveled the world but had never before visited South Korea – as he did just days after his 90th birthday. But as ROK media noted, the senior elder in both age and rank visibly deferred to the royal princess one-third his age.

Kim Yo Jong came South again, this time with her brother, for the April 27 summit. Her role there was in part gendered and sisterly: fussing around him, drying the ink on his signature on the Panmunjom Declaration, ensuring his chair was exactly in place behind him to sit down. Yet she was also one of just three members of the DPRK's nine-strong delegation who took part in the morning's North-South talks – indeed the only woman at the table. Clearly, she is a power in the land – or maybe big brother cannot function without her. We shall see if she is similarly prominent when Kim meets Donald Trump in Singapore on June 12.

## Olympic aftermath, summit preparations

The inter-Korean bonhomie proved to be more than merely an Olympic truce. Both sides used this as a valuable chance to size each other up. Besides the ceremonial at PyeongChang, the two DPRK delegations to the opening and closing ceremonies also held less publicized but intensive meetings with their counterparts in Seoul. Simply getting to know one another was a step forward. A decade has passed since the sunshine era ended. Since then, both Koreas have new leaderships, and the personal contacts built up during the earlier decade of engagement have largely withered. (The DPRK being what it is, several North Koreans who dealt closely with the South back then have not been seen since.)

With the Olympics as an ice-breaker, each Korea needed to explore the other's intentions to see what common ground was possible. After the Games, it was the South's turn to head North, as a delegation duly did on March 5. Led by Blue House security chief Chung Eui-yong and National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon (the latter a veteran negotiator with the DPRK, whom we [profiled](#) soon after Moon appointed him a year ago), the 10-strong ROK team [met](#) a genial Kim Jong Un just three hours after their plane landed at Pyongyang's Sunan airport. (His late father Kim Jong Il, by contrast, kept senior Southern visitors waiting with no schedule given, turning up if at all on their last day.) As Chinese media [noted](#), the meeting venue was striking: the WPK headquarters building, which no South Korean is known to have entered. (The Party's statutes still list communization of the entire peninsula among its goals.)

This lengthy (over four hours, including a banquet) and cordial meeting yielded substantial results. Relaxed and confident, Kim agreed to come South for a summit in late April, to be held at Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). This date would coincide with annual joint US-ROK military maneuvers, at which the DPRK normally screams blue murder. No problem, said Kim; he would "understand if they go ahead at the same level as in past years." In fact, the *Foal Eagle* exercise, which the US had already agreed to postpone (along with a companion exercise, *Key Resolve*) until after the Olympics and the ensuing Paralympics, were rather more low-key this year – and were suspended on the actual day of the summit.

As recounted elsewhere in this issue, meeting Kim immediately made Chung a hot property. As breathless media often omitted to say, headlines such as "North Korea Ready to Give Up Nukes" were incomplete without the rider "Says South Korea." It is wise to be wary of ventriloquists ('A says that B says...') in politics. We need to hear it from B, especially when B is North Korea. That said, Chung and the ROK played a valuable intermediary role. No sooner back from Pyongyang, Chung headed straight to Washington – and within days we had not one but two summits to look forward to with the formerly reclusive Kim Jong Un.

A telling vignette only emerged a month later. When Kim, a notorious chain smoker – official photographs show him cigarette in hand in hospitals, kindergartens, liquid fuel rocket engine test sites, you name it – lit up at the banquet, Chung Eui-yong had the temerity to [suggest](#) he should quit for the sake of his health. Kim's entourage, even the redoubtable Kim Yong Chol (on whom more below), froze in terror at such *lèse-majesté*. Kim's wife Ri Sol Ju saved the day, clapping her hands and saying: You tell him, he won't listen to me.

## The third North-South summit

And so to the *pièce de résistance*: the third inter-Korean summit, held after a gap of over a decade on April 27. Readers of this journal must already be satiated with coverage of the event itself, so our comments here will be selective, analytical, and mostly forward-looking.

On any level the summit was a stunning success. The two sides had clearly worked hard to produce a spectacle that would look good and boost both leaders. The venue, for starters, was a stroke of genius in several ways. Summits were supposed to alternate; but Kim's father Kim Jong Il evidently refused to go south, so the first two were both held in Pyongyang (Kim Dae-jung visited in 2000, and Roh Moo-hyun in 2007 as we chronicled at the [time](#).) That set a bad precedent of asymmetry, arguably a flaw of the 'sunshine' policy overall. Even supporters of the South's outreach then, this writer included, must admit that on all fronts Seoul kept giving much more than it ever got in return. Now that a fresh phase of inter-Korean engagement has begun, to be real it must be far more genuinely reciprocal. Both sides have to give.

This time the North's leader did the right thing and came South – if only by a few yards. A second virtue of Panmunjom as a venue was its symbolism. It exists because of bitter conflict, not over, as in a shootout last November when a KPA soldier fled to the South in a hail of bullets. On April 27, by contrast, the sun shone in every sense. Third, this was a summit made for TV – which by no means makes it insubstantial. Memorable images will long linger, not least one that amid all the carefully crafted theater looked unscripted: the moment when Kim, having just crossed the Military Demarcation Line (MDL), took Moon briefly into the North. If that gesture truly was spontaneous, Moon's security detail must have had a few anxious seconds.



2.South Korean President Moon shakes hands with North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un (The Diplomat)

They were largely invisible, unlike Kim's. One of the summit's odder images was Kim's limo conveying him back across the line – the two sides lunched separately, each taking stock of the morning's events – with a dozen besuited bodyguards running alongside, far fitter than their leader. (Overweight myself, I am neither mocking nor body-shaming here, but making a serious and under-rated point. Though he did manage only to smoke once during the summit, Kim's health and his evident neglect of it is a serious risk. What if he drops dead tomorrow?)

Other memorable images, designed to be so, were the joint tree-planting and the two leaders' walk and talk – out of earshot – in what seemed a sylvan glade. Their personal chemistry was clearly good, which always helps. The bonhomie continued into the evening banquet that concluded proceedings, where the two leaders were joined by their wives – something Kim Jong Il, with his complex marital history, never did – and Kim Jong Un drained every glass

put in front of him. This must all have made an extremely long and tiring day for the Northern party, assuming that they drove down from and back to Pyongyang the same day rather than staying before and/or after locally, e.g., in Kaesong.

### The Panmunjom Declaration: plenty of meat

Much as optics matter, the summit was far more than a mere photo-opportunity. No one knew in advance what kind of agreement it would yield. Of the several past inter-Korean accords over the past 46 years, some have been brief and hence short on detail. These include the very first, 1972's July 4 North-South Joint Statement signed by the two sides' intelligence chiefs, which has just 382 words. Thinner still at a mere 329 words is the much-touted June 15 (2000) Joint Declaration issued after the first summit. (Its final sentence: "Chairman Kim Jong Il will visit Seoul at an appropriate time." He never did.)

By contrast, the second Pyongyang summit on Oct. 4 2007 produced a much more substantial Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity. Its eight sections and 1,237 words include many specific projects as well as general principles. Solider still, if a tad shorter at 1,031 words, is the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges And Cooperation Between the South and the North, signed in December 1991 by the two Korea's prime ministers after eight meetings over two years. Its four chapters and 25 articles provide a comprehensive framework for progress on all fronts. A month later in January 1992 the two premiers signed an accompanying joint declaration on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which is shorter (277 words) but unambiguous.

The problem is that none of those accords was ever implemented. The 1991 agreement was stillborn, coinciding as it did with rising concern over the DPRK's nuclear activities – which prompted Pyongyang to become uncooperative. After 2007, by contrast, it was the ROK that backtracked. A new conservative president, Lee Myung-bak, elected in December 2007, simply did not implement the joint projects his left-leaning predecessor Roh Moo-hyun had signed up to.

Not to rain on the Korea's parade, but this rather discouraging history can hardly be ignored

when assessing their latest foray. At 1,204 words, the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula is clearly in the substantive category. The full [text](#) is widely available; readers may want to peruse this before reading our commentary.

Despite some inevitable flannel (“reconnect the blood relations of the people”; you can see which phrases the North inserted), the good news is that there are several specific pledges in particular areas, some with timelines. For instance, clause 2.3 says that military talks between generals will be held in May. None have been fixed at this writing, so we shall see. If this happens, the two sides are serious. The same clause specifies “frequent meetings between military authorities, including the Defense Ministers Meeting.” Again, the two Koreas have set themselves a target with a touchstone by which we can judge success or failure.

Other date-bound commitments include shared celebrations, starting with the anniversary of the 2000 summit on June 15. More joint sports teams are also envisaged; clause 1.4 specifies at the Asian Games, due in October in Indonesia. Already in fact at the world table tennis championships held in Sweden, the two Koreas swiftly formed a single team: it won bronze.

Several areas warrant comment. A resident joint liaison office will be opened in Kaesong, just north of the DMZ, to facilitate cooperation and exchanges; no date was given for that. The South has also suggested exchanging offices in Seoul and Pyongyang.

Clause 1.5 is a win for Seoul, with the very welcome news that separated-family reunions are to resume on Liberation Day, Aug. 15, for the first time since October 2015. These one-off and rather artificial events were never frequent enough to accommodate all who have pined for relatives unseen since 1953 or earlier, even though this cohort is now very old and rapidly dying off. Pyongyang had been refusing reunions unless Seoul returned 12 waitresses who worked in a DPRK restaurant in Ningbo, China until April 2016. The South claims they all defected, but the North has always insisted that they were kidnapped by the ROK spy agency, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) – successor to the dreaded KCIA, and still tarnished by a frankly unsavory [record](#) of wrongdoing on many fronts.

Sensationally, it emerged on May 10 that the North is right. In a TV interview the restaurant’s former manager, Heo Kang-il, [admitted](#) he plotted the whole thing with the NIS. The young women had no idea where he was taking them (a new assignment, he said); and at least some do want to go home. Although this happened under his predecessor Park Geun-hye, its revelation creates quite a headache for Moon Jae-in, but it may have a silver lining. The North seemed to have dropped this issue as a precondition for family reunions. And with the DPRK’s release on May 9 of three Korean-Americans whom it had jailed, there is now talk of perhaps ‘trading’ the waitresses for up to six South Koreans now detained in Pyongyang.

### **Military measures**

Encouragingly, the Panmunjom Declaration has much to say on military tensions, which the earlier period of engagement barely addressed. Some plans are specific and fairly immediate, like the aforementioned generals’ meeting. Clause 2.1 stipulates that both sides must by May 1 remove propaganda loudspeakers along the DMZ, which was swiftly done. It also bans leaflet distribution, which is trickier. Defector activists and their supporters regularly launch helium balloons northward, carrying dollars, radios, and critiques of the Kim regime. Previous conservative ROK governments mostly took the line that this was a free speech issue, but did sometimes try to stop it on safety grounds. In October 2014, the KPA fired across the border, and nearby local residents complained of risk to their lives and livelihood (because tourists were frightened off). Now the order has gone out to desist, but the activists are a tenacious bunch. Expect cat and mouse games with the police, as in the past. If some balloons get through, North Korea could if so minded accuse the South of breaking their new agreement.

Other kites flown are much more long-term. “Bringing an end to the current unnatural state of armistice and establishing a robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula” may indeed be “a historical mission that must not be delayed any further”. But as clause 3.3 of the Declaration recognizes, with its talk of trilateral or quadrilateral meetings, this cannot be done by Koreans alone. Replacing the 1953 Armistice – not in fact signed by the ROK, as its then-President Syngman Rhee refused – must obviously involve the other signatories, China and the US (the latter in the name of the UN,

which adds a further layer of complication). We shall see whether the idea of formally ending the Korean War, which has long been vaguely in play, finally gains traction.

Of particular interest are what might be called middle-range security proposals. Clause 3.2 commits the two sides to “carry out disarmament in a phased manner, as military tension is alleviated and substantial progress is made in military confidence-building.” There is plenty of scope for that: pulling back forward-deployed KPA units for instance, or removing some of the thousands of heavy artillery pieces trained on Seoul. If matters of this kind are seriously discussed and implemented, inter-Korean relations will indeed have entered a new phase.

More familiarly, Clause 2.2 posits “a practical scheme to turn the areas around the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone in order to prevent accidental military clashes and guarantee safe fishing activities.” (The DPRK has never recognized the NLL, so this term’s appearance in an official joint document is noteworthy.) A similar idea was part of the 2007 summit plans, but like all of them unimplemented. In 2010 those same waters saw two sneak attacks: the sinking of the corvette *Cheonan* (which the North has never admitted) and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island near the DPRK coast, causing a combined 50 fatalities.

### **An unwelcome guest**

Hence, many South Koreans were angry when the KPA general widely seen as masterminding both those assaults, Kim Yong Chol, came south, first for the Olympics closing ceremony – where incongruously he shared the VIP box with Ivanka Trump; no contact was made – and then with the summit delegation. Having changed jobs in 2016 to become Pyongyang’s point man on South Korea, he could hardly be refused; but protesters, including kin of the 46 who died in the *Cheonan* – mostly national service ratings, drowned in their bunks as they slept – tried to block his entry at the border, forcing him to use a different crossing point. The Moon administration’s official line, that it is uncertain who exactly was behind the 2010 attacks, was undermined when Defense Minister Song Young-moo admitted that he for one had no doubt.

Other than going to PyeongChang, Kim remained holed up in the Walkerhill Hotel in eastern Seoul, where he held intensive but unpublicized talks – six official meetings and several more unofficial ones, but no photos or videos were issued – with Chung Eui-yong, director of the Blue House National Security Office, and other top ROK officials. Kim Yo Jong and her party had also stayed there earlier, but with less security and venturing out more. Ironically – given that it was named after the US general whose Eighth Army pushed the KPA back almost to the Yalu, early on in the Korean War – this hotel has been the venue of choice for Northern visitors (overt or covert) since the 1980s, being fairly inaccessible. According to the rightwing ROK [daily Chosun Ilbo](#), the Northern delegation occupied the entire 17th floor. South Korea’s Ministry of Unification had the 16th, with the NIS taking a further two floors.

Kim later featured in an odd incident on home turf. On April 2, he [came](#) to the Koryo Hotel to soothe Southern journalists, furious at being barred from the K-pop concert they had come to Pyongyang to cover. North Korea is not known for apologizing, but Kim did just that. More remarkably still, he blamed the mix-up (quite plausibly) on Kim Jong Un’s security squad, who overruled the journalists’ minders. Kim introduced himself to the ROK press as the man they all blame for sinking the *Cheonan*: an attempt at levity that did not go down well.

The concert the hacks missed deserves mention. Reciprocating the Samjiyon band’s trip South, the ROK sent a medley of performers featuring a cross-section of Southern popular music, from aging crooners to a miniskirted girl group. Nothing too edgy; the rapper Psy of Gangnam Style fame didn’t make the cut. They gave two performances; Kim Jong Un attended the first, apologizing that thereafter his schedule was too tight (we know now he was meeting Mike Pompeo). Kim enjoyed the show, and posed for a [photo](#) with the visitors. Yet if ordinary North Koreans are caught listening to such music, they risk a harsh fate. Maybe Kim will end such hypocrisy and lighten up if the North-South thaw deepens. Meanwhile early May saw reports that the ROK may lift its own longstanding ban on its citizens accessing Northern media.



3Kim Jong Un poses for a photo with South Korean performers (cdn.cnn.com)

### **Business: only reconnect – but sanctions?**

Returning to the Panmunjom Declaration, economic cooperation also features. Clause 1.6 envisages returning “actively” to 2007’s unrealized projects, “to promote balanced economic growth and co-prosperity of the nation”. It continues, “As a first step, the two sides agreed to adopt practical steps towards the connection and modernization of the railways and roads on the eastern transportation corridor as well as between Seoul and Sinuiju for their utilization.”

Longstanding readers will recall the railway saga. In brief, over a decade ago in the ‘sunshine’ era South Korea paid to rebuild and relink these two corridors (a gap remains in the eastern railway, which is a sideline leading nowhere much), But the North never allowed regular train service, except for the few miles to the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) – whose investors mostly found road transport cheaper and easier. With Kim Jong Un admitting to Moon that the condition of DPRK transport infrastructure is “embarrassing,” maybe he is serious where his father was cautious. Encouragingly, specifying Seoul to Sinuiju means the entire length of the DPRK, right up to the Chinese border – where a new \$350 million bridge, built and paid for by China, remains idle because no off-ramps have been built on the Korean side. Here again it is easy to state the criteria whereby we shall know if Kim means business. The large agenda between Kim and Xi Jinping in their two recent meetings (covered elsewhere in this issue) will surely have included a terse Chinese demand to just open the bridge.

We now know that there was more to the economic side of the summit than appeared in the Declaration. Moon [handed](#) Kim a USB stick,

laying out concrete detailed plans for the kind of wide-ranging intercourse he has advocated ever since he was chief of staff to President Roh Moo-hyun (in office 2003-08). Less clear is how far any of this – or other ideas like reopening the KIC – is currently feasible or legal, given stringent UN and other sanctions. Exemptions could be sought. But we may soon see an argument between the US and Japan on one side, and China and South Korea in the other, over how much economic leeway Kim can or should be given, prior to any substantial denuclearization. The latter, as widely noted, hardly features in the Pyongyang Declaration – whereas it will be center stage on June 12 in Singapore.

### **For real, this time?**

In conclusion, the task at this fascinating moment is to strike the right balance between hope and cynicism. This we have tried to do. To repeat, we expect the North this time to deliver with the South, as a ploy to help it postpone or spin out denuclearization. How these two diplomatic tracks – local and multifaceted on the peninsula, but single-mindedly nuclear on the global stage and especially in Washington – will play out and interact is the key issue.

If Kim Jong Un comes to Singapore with a solid offer on denuclearization, that would permit full-scale implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration. But if as expected he wavers, we are in for protracted horse-trading. That is still a better prospect and place to be than last year’s barrage of ICBMs and trans-Pacific threats and taunts about whose button is bigger: a faceoff that relegated a frustrated and anxious South Korea to the sidelines, despite its being in the front line were hostilities to break out. Moon resolved to put Seoul in the driver’s seat, and already his skills have achieved more than just an Olympic hiatus. To use his own metaphor, he is at least a front seat passenger – with a map, but does he know the destination? Yet let us be clear who is driving this car, fast and well, smiling broadly. It is Kim Jong Un, isn’t it?

# CHRONOLOGY OF NORTH KOREA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

## JANUARY – APRIL 2018

**Jan. 1, 2018:** Kim Jong Un's New Year [address](#), broadcast live on state TV, repeats nuclear threats against the US but, in a major shift, is conciliatory towards South Korea. In particular, Kim praises the upcoming PyeongChang Winter Olympics and offers to send a delegation.

**Jan. 2, 2018:** South Korea's Foreign Ministry (MOFA) [pledges](#) that Seoul will continue "watertight" cooperation with Washington, even as it takes steps to resume dialogue with Pyongyang.

**Jan. 3, 2018:** Northern media report that Kim Jong Un, welcoming South Korea's positive response to his New Year address, has [ordered](#) the Panmunjom liaison channel (hot line) to reopen from 3pm that day, so that inter-Korean talks toward DPRK participation in the "Phyongchang Olympiad" (as North Korea spells it) and other matters can be arranged. The hot line duly reopens on schedule.

**Jan. 6, 2018:** The Blue House (Cheongwadae, South Korea's Presidential office) [calls](#) inter-Korean talks "the starting point for the settlement of peace on the Korean peninsula and North Korean nuclear and missile problems."

**Jan. 6-7, 2018:** The long-idled inter-Korean hotline is busy all weekend, as the two Koreas embark on detailed [discussions](#) by phone and fax to arrange their upcoming talks, due Jan. 9.

**Jan. 6, 2018:** President Trump [says](#) apropos the upcoming inter-Korean talks: "I would love to see them take it beyond the Olympics ... And at the appropriate time, we'll get involved."

**Jan. 7, 2018:** North Korea [informs](#) the South of its five-person delegation for Jan. 9's talks. Its leader is Ri Son Gwon, an experienced inter-Korean negotiator who chairs the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country (CPRC, formerly CPRK: a state agency since 2016). Other delegates include CPRC vice chairman Jon Jong Su, and Won Kil U, a top sports ministry official.

**Jan. 8, 2018:** *Yonhap*, South Korea's quasi-official news agency, [claims](#) that a serious decline in the squid catch experienced by ROK fishermen in the East Sea is due to over-fishing by Chinese boats in DPRK waters, which sweep the seabed before the cephalopods have a chance to swim South. Since North Korea first licensed PRC vessels to fish in its east coast waters in 2004, their number has surged from 140 in that year to 1,238 ships as of 2016.

**Jan. 8, 2018:** Launching a MOFA task force for foreign leaders' visits to the PyeongChang Olympics (over 40 are expected), ROK Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha [says](#) South Korea hopes the momentum from North Korea's now expected participation in the Games will lead to wider progress in inter-Korean relations and the North's denuclearization.

**Jan. 8, 2018:** South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) [says](#) that, starting today, it will give regular monthly briefings on North Korea to the foreign, defense and unification ministries. Observers are puzzled at the implication that this had not been done previously.

**Jan. 8, 2018:** ROK Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon [says](#) that while tomorrow's talks will "basically ... focus on the Olympics," Seoul will "also seek to raise the issue of war-torn [separated] families and ways to ease military tensions."

**Jan. 9, 2018:** *Korea Times* [cites](#) Cho Dong-uk, an audio forensic specialist at Chungnam State University, as claiming that sound samples from Kim Jong Un's New Year speech suggest that the Northern leader has kidney problems. The test reportedly involved jitters, shimmer, noise-to-harmonics ratio and voice 'energy.' But his lungs and heart are just fine.

**Jan. 9, 2018:** High-level North-South talks are held for 11 hours on the southern side of Panmunjom, the so-called 'truce village' in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). A [joint statement](#)

agrees that North Korea will send athletes, an arts troupe, a cheering squad and more to the PyeongChang Olympics, and that further talks – including military, which in fact seems not to have happened – will be held to firm up the details.

**Jan. 11, 2018:** Choi Myeong-hee, mayor of Gangneung – capital of Gangwon province and host to the PyeongChang Olympics’ ice sports matches – [says](#) his city wants to “contribute to the ‘[Peace Olympics](#)’” by housing DPRK athletes, cheerleaders and performing artistes in Gangneung Ojuk Hanok Village, a new tourist [resort](#) that can accommodate 300 people.

**Jan. 11, 2018:** *NKNews* [analyzes](#) Kim Jong Un’s public appearances in 2017. Almost half (46) were military in focus, followed by economic and political (24 each), cultural (4) and other (4). Over half (58) were in Pyongyang. Kim’s most frequent companion (38 times) was Hwang Pyong So, despite his vanishing in Oct. (see Dec. 13); followed by the less-known Jo Yong Won, a top official of the ruling Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK)’s Organisation and Guidance Dept. (OGD), with 37.

**Jan. 11, 2018:** *Yonhap* [notes](#) that several aspects of the effort to bring North Koreans to PyeongChang might violate UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions against the DPRK, or indeed the ROK’s own. It claims that the Moon government’s stance on this is as yet unclear.

**Jan. 12, 2018:** South Korea uses the newly reopened inter-Korean hotline to [inform](#) the North of it plans to return four corpses found by ROK fishermen in a DPRK boat adrift in the East Sea. (Such finds are not rare in recent years, but more commonly in [Japanese](#) waters.)

**Jan. 12, 2018:** ROK Vice Sports Minister Roh Taekang [says](#) Seoul proposes a joint inter-Korean women’s ice hockey team, and also that North and South should march together at the Olympic opening ceremony.

**Jan. 13, 2018:** Pyongyang [proposes](#) talks on Jan. 15 at Panmunjom about sending an art troupe to Pyeongchang, rather than a working meeting on sports issues. South Korea’s Ministry of Unification (MOU) notes that the art troupe seems to be the North’s main priority. The South accepts, while urging the North to also set a date to discuss sports.

**Jan. 13, 2018:** An unnamed activist [tells](#) *Yonhap* that two female North Korean defectors drowned recently when their boat capsized on the Mekong River. Ten more swam back to Laos, but later made it safely to Thailand. The group began their journey in Shandong, China; most had previously been trafficked into China.

**Jan. 14, 2018:** A commentary published by North Korea’s official *Korean Central News Agency* (KCNA) commentary [flays](#) Moon Jae-in for giving Donald Trump credit for the new inter-Korean peace process, calling this “brown-nosing” and “coarse invectives”.

**Jan. 15, 2018:** Meeting at Panmunjom, the two Koreas [agree](#) that the North will send a 140-strong orchestra South to perform in PyeongChang and Seoul during the Winter Olympics.

**Jan. 17, 2018:** Meeting at Panmunjom, the two Koreas confirm they will march together in the Olympics opening ceremony, field a joint women’s ice hockey team, and do joint skiing training at the North’s Masikryong resort: a project closely associated with Kim Jong Un.

**Jan. 20, 2018:** After consultations with both Koreas, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach [announces](#) that North Korea will send 22 athletes, plus 24 coaches and officials, to the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games. Besides forming a joint women’s ice hockey team with South Korea, the North will compete in figure skating, short track speed skating, cross-country skiing and alpine skiing. DPRK participation required “exceptional decisions” by the IOC, as none of its athletes had actually qualified.

**Jan. 20, 2018:** Seven-strong DPRK team enters the ROK by road at Dorasan to inspect venues for the Samjiyon Orchestra’s Olympic concerts. Its leader is Hyon Song Wol attracts huge media interest, but says little in public. Her party returns home late on Jan. 21 by the same overland route.

**Jan. 25, 2018:** 12 female DPRK hockey players, their coach, and two support staff [cross](#) the DMZ. They are greeted by their ROK counterparts, with whom they will form a joint team.

**Jan. 29, 2018:** Blaming “insulting” Southern media coverage, North Korea abruptly [cancels](#) a joint concert at its long-shuttered Mt Kumgang set for Feb.4. An ROK advance party mooted bringing their own generators as the local power supply was so poor, prompting critics to claim this would violate sanctions. Pyongyang was also cross with Southern criticisms of its planned military parade (see Feb.8).

**Jan. 31, 2018:** ROK skiers (not in fact Olympians) fly North for two days’ joint training with DPRK counterparts at Masikryong. Their chartered Asiana flight from [Yangyang](#) airport near Gangneung is the first ROK aircraft to fly to the DPRK using an east coast route, and also the first such to land at Wonsan’s pristine [Kalma](#) airport: a military facility adapted in 2015 to take tourists too. Its modernization costing \$200 million, but it has hardly been used.

**Feb. 1, 2018:** The [return](#) flight from Kalma to Yangyang conveys not only the 31 South Koreans (12 each of alpine and cross-country skiers, support staff and reporters), but also 32 North Koreans including 10 athletes (3 alpine skiers, 3 cross-country skiers, 2 figure skaters and 2 short track skaters.) This completes Team DPRK; as their 12 female ice hockey players are already in the South for joint training.

**Feb. 1, 2018:** In a [commentary](#) headlined “South Korean conservatives, nation’s enemy,” the *Pyongyang Times* repeats in surprising detail right-wing ROK criticisms of the new inter-Korean thaw.

**Feb. 6, 2018:** DPRK vessel *Mangyongbong-92* [docks](#) at the ROK’s Mukho port on the east coast. It conveys the North’s Samjiyon Orchestra, and is their ‘floatel’ till they perform at nearby Gangneung on Feb. 8. They [stay on board](#) till [Feb. 7](#), shunning a welcome dinner in their honor; possibly due to noisy anti-communist protests near their boat.

**Feb. 7, 2018:** Shortly after midnight, 280 North Koreans – 229 cheerleaders, 26 taekwondo athletes, 21 journalists and four sports officials including Sports Minister Kim Il Guk – [enter](#) South Korea at the Dorasan crossing. They proceed by bus to PyeongChang, with the ROK media in [hot pursuit](#).

**Feb. 8, 2018:** With Kim Jong Un in [attendance](#), a military [parade](#) in Pyongyang marks the 70th anniversary of the Korean People’s Army (KPA).

Many in South Korea deplore the timing of this, on the very eve of the Olympics. One new [missile](#) is spotted.

**Feb. 8, 2018:** Samjiyon Orchestra [gives](#) its first Southern concert at Gangneung. The 45 numbers include 11 from South Korea, mostly decades-old ‘trot.’ After some argument the North complies with ROK demands to exclude two songs: one saying ‘socialism is nice’, the other referencing North-led reunification. A source at Gangneung Arts Center reveals that Hyon Song Wol borrowed an iron, and said she will miss their coffee.

**Feb. 9, 2018:** A 22-strong delegation, [formally](#) led by the DPRK’s nonagenarian titular head of state Kim Yong Nam and featuring Kim Jong Un’s sister Kim Yo Jong as her brother’s special envoy, [flies](#) into Incheon on the Northern leader’s personal aircraft. After official welcomes, they proceed directly to PyeongChang for the Olympic opening ceremony.

**Feb. 9, 2018:** President Moon opens the XXIII Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang. The North and South Korean teams enter the stadium [jointly](#), to a standing ovation: pointedly [not](#) joined by US Vice President Pence, who also blanked the DPRK VIPs seated just yards away.

**Feb. 9, 2018:** MOU says the North has withdrawn a [request](#) for fuel for the *Mangyongbong-92*. It would have been hard to ensure this contained no US elements, which would breach sanctions. The vessel sails home on Feb. 10, evidently able to do so without refueling.

**Feb. 10, 2018:** At a luncheon in Seoul, Kim Yo Jong extends her brother’s invitation to Moon Jae-in to visit Pyongyang. He thanks her but does not immediately accept.

**Feb. 10, 2018:** Reuters [reports](#) “kicking, screaming and flying planks” at PyeongChang. Nothing untoward, just the two Koreas’ taekwondo demonstration teams performing their second show. The first was at the Olympic opening ceremony the previous day.

**Feb. 11, 2018:** The Samjiyon Orchestra performs in Seoul. In the audience Moon Jae-in sits [next](#) to Kim Yo Jong (their fourth meeting in three days), who flies back to Pyongyang with her delegation later that evening. The orchestra returns home overland next morning.

**Feb. 13, 2018:** Welcoming back the North's delegation to the Olympics opening ceremony, Kim Jong Un [calls](#) their treatment in the South "very impressive." He vows to "continue making good results by further livening up the warm climate of reconciliation and dialogue."

**Feb. 19, 2018:** KCNA [reports](#) on two further joint taekwondo performances, in Seoul on Feb. 12 and 14. The DPRK team "knocked out their opponents with swift actions and strong strikes ... winning the admiration of the spectators."

**Feb. 21, 2018:** *Yonhap* [tallies](#) North Korea's performance at the Winter Olympics. It won no medals (South Korea [ranked](#) seventh). The North's star performers were figure skating pair Ryom Tae Ok and Kim Ju Sik, who placed 13th with a personal best of 184.98 points.

**Feb. 22, 2018:** DPRK names an eight-member [delegation](#) to attend the PyeongChang Olympics closing ceremony. Controversially it is led by KPA General [Kim Yong Chol](#). Now vice-chairman of the WPK CC in charge of inter-Korean affairs, Kim is seen in South Korea as responsible for sinking the corvette *Cheonan* and shelling Yeonpyeong Island in 2010 when he headed the DPRK's Reconnaissance Bureau, which runs clandestine operations. Also in the delegation is Kim's close aide CPRC chairman [Ri Son Gwon](#).

**Feb. 25, 2018:** Kim Yong Chol and his party [cross](#) into the South by an unexpected route, to avoid protestors seeking to block them. Going first to Seoul, Kim [meets](#) Moon Jae-in at the Blue House (this was not pre-announced) before heading to PyeongChang for the Olympics closing ceremony, where as predicted he has no interaction with Ivanka Trump nearby.

**Feb. 26, 2018:** 299 North Koreans – cheerleaders, athletes, journalists and officials – [return](#) home overland via Dorasan. (The link details the cheering squad's activities: generally well-received – with some [exceptions](#) – and including several unscheduled local shows.)

**Feb. 27, 2018:** Kim Yong Chol and party [return](#) home, after two further days of intensive but little-publicized [meetings](#) (at least six official one) with senior ROK officials in Seoul.

**Feb. 28, 2018:** Asked by independent lawmaker Rep. Lee Jung-hyun whether a North Korean reconnaissance submarine sank the *Cheonan*,

ROK Defense Minister Song Young-moo [says](#): "I believe that to be the case." This contradicts the official ROK government line, [invoked](#) during Kim Yong Chol's recent visit, that it is unclear who precisely was behind the attack.

**March 5, 2018:** A five-strong ROK delegation headed by Blue House security adviser Chung Eui-yong flies into Pyongyang. Hours later they begin four hours of [talks](#) with Kim Jong Un, including a banquet: the first time Kim has met Southern officials. They fly home next day.

**March 6, 2018:** Chung Eui-yong [reveals](#) that the two Korean leaders will hold a summit in late April, at Panmunjom on the southern side. A hotline between them will be installed before then. Chung adds that Kim restated his commitment to denuclearization.

**March 14, 2018:** While the US and ROK discuss cost-sharing for USFK, the WPK daily *Rodong Sinmun* [weighs in](#): "What South Koreans want is an unconditional withdrawal of US troops from the South, an unwelcome guest that poses a threat to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula."

**March 20, 2018:** In talks at Panmunjom, the two Koreas [agree](#) that 160 ROK musicians will visit Pyongyang from March 31 – April 3, giving two concerts there. Performers include girl group Red Velvet, Seohyun of Girls' Generation (who joined the Samjiyon Orchestra on stage in Seoul), and crooner Cho Yong-pil, who gave a solo concert in Pyongyang in 2005.

**March 21, 2018:** Seoul's summit preparation committee [suggests](#) talks with Pyongyang on March 29 to finalize details of the meeting.

**March 29, 2018:** The two Koreas [set](#) April 27 as the date for their third summit. The same day, 70 ROK music technicians fly to Pyongyang to prepare for the upcoming concerts.

**March 31, 2018:** 120 Southern [musicians](#) et al – officials, reporters and a taekwondo demonstration team – fly into Pyongyang.

**April 1, 2018:** ROK musicians give their first [concert](#) in the East Pyongyang Grand Theater, with Kim Jong Un present. He claps along, and has a photograph taken afterwards with the assembled performers. Several South Korean journalists are refused entry, however.

**April 2, 2018:** In a rare DPRK [apology](#), Kim Yong Chol visits ROK reporters in the Koryo hotel. He blames Kim Jong Un's security guards for their exclusion from the K-pop concert.

**April 3, 2018:** ROK musicians give their [second](#) Pyongyang concert, in a much larger venue: the 12,000-seat Ryugyong Chung Ju Yung Gymnasium, paid for by and named for Hyundai's northern-born eponymous founder.

**April 5, 2018:** The two sides [discuss](#) protocol and security for the summit at Panmunjom. Several similar meetings follow.

**April 12, 2018:** Pouring cold water on pleas – including a joint letter from over 200 NGOs – that DPRK human rights should be discussed at the upcoming summit, MOU [states](#): “The main agenda will be denuclearization, establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula and improving North-South relations. Nothing more, nothing less.”

**April 23, 2018:** Blue House [announces](#) that the two Koreas have reached agreement on protocol, security and media coverage for the third inter-Korean summit later this week.

**April 25, 2018:** DPRK advance team comes South and stays until Friday's summit.

**April 27, 2018:** The third North-South summit is held on the Southern side of Panmunjom. A long, busy and various day mostly goes off smoothly, ending with a banquet and a substantial Panmunjom [Declaration](#). (The full schedule, fulfilled almost to the letter, can be read [here](#).)

**April 30, 2018:** The ROK defense ministry (MND) [says](#) removal of loudspeakers at the DMZ will begin tomorrow (May 1). MND calls this a “rudimentary” and easy step, noting that (by contrast) creating a peace zone in the West/Yellow Sea will require further consultations.

**April 30, 2018:** President Moon calls for swift parliamentary ratification of the Panmunjom Declaration. This is not guaranteed, for Moon's Democratic Party (DP) holds only 121 of the [National Assembly's](#) 299 seats. The conservative opposition Liberty Korea Party (LKP), which has vowed to block ratification, has 116. How minor parties vote will thus be crucial.

**April 30, 2018:** MOU [says](#) the South is considering early high-level inter-Korean talks on the new agreement to open a North-South liaison office in Kaesong. If all goes well, the office could open by June.

**April 30, 2018:** Confirming a surprise decision by Kim Jong Un at the Panmunjom summit, the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), the DPRK parliament, decrees that Northern [time](#) will move forward by 30 minutes on May 5 to become the same as in South Korea. That was the case until 2015, when Pyongyang quixotically set its clocks back half an hour – to protest at Japan having brought Korea into its own time zone during the colonial era, a century ago.

**April 30, 2018:** First in a tweet and then at a press conference, President Trump [describes](#) as “intriguing” the idea of the DMZ as one possible venue for his forthcoming summit meeting with Kim Jong Un: “There's something that I like about it because you're there.”

**April 30, 2018:** *Yonhap* quotes major credit rating agencies [hailing](#) the inter-Korean summit as “credit positive” for the ROK, while not yet eliminating geopolitical risk on the peninsula.

**May 1, 2018:** ROK Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon [reports](#) Kim Jong Un as saying that Moon's proposal to open liaison offices in Seoul and Pyongyang could be discussed. Cho adds that Kim's grip on power is firm, and he has a “strong will” for economic development.

**May 1, 2018:** As scheduled, South Korea [begins](#) dismantling its propaganda loudspeakers at the DMZ. MND says the North began doing the same earlier that day.

**May 1, 2018:** In a half-hour phone call to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, President Moon [asks](#) the UN to endorse the Pyongyang Declaration and play a role in verifying North Korea's commitment to denuclearization and peace.

**May 7, 2018:** Seoul [reveals](#) that at the summit Moon handed Kim a USB stick containing a detailed blueprint for how the South could help rebuild the Northern economy, including new power plants and much more.