

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

NORTH KOREA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

AN INAUSPICIOUS START

AIDAN FOSTER-CARTER, LEEDS UNIVERSITY, UK

On May 10 Yoon Suk Yeol took office as ROK president, and rapidly lost popularity. While talking tough on North Korea, he also offered aid to fight COVID-19—but was ignored. His “audacious plan,” wholly unoriginal, to reward Pyongyang materially if it denuclearizes, had very little detail. For months the DPRK did not even mention Yoon. In late July Kim Jong Un sharply warned him against any pre-emptive strike. In August, his sister Kim Yo Jong put the boot in: ludicrously blaming materials sent by ROK activists for bringing COVID-19 into the DPRK, savaging Yoon’s proposal as insulting and unoriginal, and saying the North will never talk to him. At home, meanwhile, the new government chose to reopen two contentious inter-Korean episodes from the recent past, seemingly to punish its predecessor’s policies. It was hard to see how good could come of that, or to hold out hope for any thaw on the peninsula.

This article is extracted from *Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal of Bilateral Relations in the Indo-Pacific*, Vol. 24, No. 2, September 2022. Preferred citation: Aidan Foster-Carter, “North Korea-South Korea Relations: An Inauspicious Start,” *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp 111-128.

Out With the Old, In With the New

While that particular shift was not revealed until May 30, the change of tone was evident as early as May 12, when North Korea conducted its first missile test of the Yoon era. As noted in our last issue, Pyongyang has been launching missiles at an unprecedented rate. Perhaps unexpectedly, since Yoon's accession the North has [slowed](#) the pace. After climaxing on June 5 with the largest ever volley in a single day—eight missiles, fired from four different locations—it has gone quiet since, other than a cruise missile test on Aug. 17.

Early in the Moon era, Seoul reacted to Northern missile tests by expressing vague “regret” about DPRK “projectiles,” avoiding the term “ballistic missile,” presumably because under UN Security Council resolutions Pyongyang is banned from any BM activity. One noted security specialist [quipped](#) that such obfuscation was a case of “projectile dysfunction.” To be fair, by the end the Moon administration was calling a BM a BM. Yoon's team went further. His National Security Office (NSO) not only “strongly [condemned](#)” the May 12 and subsequent missile launches, but also “deplore[d] North Korea's two-faced actions” of continuing BM provocations while neglecting its people's lives and safety amid a coronavirus outbreak. “Provocation” was another term Seoul had eschewed under Moon; no longer. Many in the ROK military, which as elsewhere tends to conservatism, no doubt welcome this more robust approach. (They may take longer to forgive Yoon the gratuitous hassle he caused them by pointlessly and expensively quitting the Blue House, South Korea's long-time presidential office and residence in northern Seoul, for more central premises in Yongsan district—in the MND compound, which entailed evicting part of the defense ministry at short notice.)

A week later, on May 19, the quasi-official news agency *Yonhap* reported that MND will reinstate the original “hawkish names” (its phrase) for two parts of South Korea's “three-axis” defense system against Northern WMD: Kill Chain, Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR; the third element is Korea Air and Missile Defense). Under Moon Jae-in these were renamed, more anodyne, as “strategic target strike” and “overwhelming response,” respectively. A spokesman claimed that reviving the old names adds “clarity.” (Whatever language is used, some observers [argue](#) that this strategy actually makes South Korea less safe.)



반종빈 기자 20220503
Figure 1 Graphic depicting South Korea's “three-axis” defense system against North Korean WMD. Photo: Yonhap

So much for words; what about deeds? Yoon insists that his overall stance that (as he told CNN on May 28) “the age of appeasing North Korea is over” does not preclude humanitarian aid. Our last issue reported Yoon's offer, in his inauguration speech, of an “audacious plan” to aid North Korea if it gave up nuclear weapons. Unoriginal as a concept, this was also vague on detail and has largely remained so; the North's eventual splenetic reaction is discussed below. Meanwhile, the North's outbreak—or belated admission—of COVID-19 gave Yoon an opportunity to offer concrete assistance. He took it, just as Moon Jae-in before him had repeatedly offered medical aid, for instance when both Koreas were hit by [swine fever](#) in 2019. In every case Pyongyang looked the ROK gift-horse in the mouth, mostly not even deigning to reply.

Permission to Speak, Comrade?

Yoon's efforts threw incidental light on the peculiarities and limits of inter-Korean telecoms. It is a small mercy that hotlines still exist in working order—although place your

bets now that sooner or later Pyongyang will pull the plug, temporarily at least, as oft times before. Seoul's efforts to use this channel for anything substantive, beyond the formal line checks at 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day, were thwarted in at least two separate cases. First with its offer of coronavirus aid, and later when it wished to formally remind the North of its obligation (routinely ignored) under inter-Korean accords to give notice before releasing water from its dams on the Imjin river which flows into the ROK, the same farce occurred. The South gave notice that it wished to fax a formal letter on the matter—but the North, as the Ministry of Unification (MOU) put it, gave no clear answer as to whether it would accept the message. This of course is tantamount to rejection, without actually doing so.

Reframing the Past

One notable and unexpected feature of the period under review was the Yoon administration's decision to revisit two macabre episodes from the recent past. There seemed no suggestion in either case that new facts had emerged, nor was Pyongyang involved, though it growled from the sidelines. Rather, this looked to be a domestic political ploy: South Korea's new government accusing its predecessor of wrongdoing as it sought to appease the North.

Regular readers of this journal will recall both incidents, which we covered fully at the time. First to be disinterred was the sad, odd case of Lee Dae-jun, a major topic of our January 2021 [article](#) (please refer for fuller details). Lee, who worked for the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF), mysteriously went missing from a survey vessel off the west coast. Floating to the DPRK shore, he was questioned and then shot in the water; his body was incinerated.

On June 16, out of the blue, the ROK Coast Guard—reversing its original stance—said that “no evidence was found to confirm his intention to defect”; it apologized for imputing that motive at the time. MND reassessed the case similarly. Meanwhile the NSO withdrew its appeal, filed under Moon Jae-in, against a court order to disclose classified information about Lee's death to his family. The latter on June 22 filed criminal complaints against three of Moon's former presidential secretaries, including ex-National Security Advisor (NSA) Suh Hoon, accusing them of dereliction of duty and obstruction.

Five days later the other shoe dropped. On Jun. 21, at the impromptu daily press conference when he arrives for work which Yoon has made a [feature](#) of his presidency, he brought up a second incident: the unprecedented repatriation at Panmunjom in November 2019 of two North Korean fishermen, who had allegedly killed 16 of their crewmates. “Haven't the people had many questions about it?” the President asked.

Here again we [covered](#) the event at the time, briefly enough to reprise here:

On Nov. 7, for the first time ever, South Korea [repatriated](#) two would-be North Korean defectors—squid fishermen, whose boat had entered Southern waters—against their will. Bound and blindfolded, they were handed over at Panmunjom to almost certain death. No one might ever have known, had not a journalist photographed a text message on the phone of a senior Blue House aide. Facing fierce criticism from the opposition as well as human rights groups, the government defended its decision, saying both men were “heinous criminals” who confessed separately to murdering the captain and no fewer than 15 fellow crewmen. Even so, critics argued, they should have faced justice in the South, there being none in the North. As it was, they were denied due process: access to lawyers, a court hearing, or any right of appeal. Even if the facts are as stated, this leaves a bad taste and sets a worrying precedent.



Figure 2 Images released by the MOU show captured North Korean fishermen resisting repatriation at Panmunjom in November 2019. Photo: Yonhap

Following up Yoon's hint, on July 12 MOU published previously unreleased photographs of the repatriation. Though heavily pixelated, the images were graphic: both men bound and blindfolded, with one slumping in an effort to resist as they are handed over. Video footage

followed a week later. On July 13 Yoon's office denounced this as a potential "crime against humanity," vowing a full investigation. Next day both MOU and the Justice Ministry (MOJ) opined that there was no legal basis for the handover (this appears to be correct).

By then a full-scale campaign had swung into action over both issues. On July 6, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) took the extraordinary step of filing criminal [complaints](#) against two of its former chiefs, charging them with abuse of power. Suh Hoon, who headed the spy agency for Moon's first three years (2017-20) before his transfer to the Blue House as NSA, is accused of cutting short a probe into the two fishermen so they could be deported; his successor Park Jie-won allegedly destroyed documents relating to the Lee Dae-jun case. On July 13 prosecutors [raided](#) the NIS: the plaintiff, but also the likely site of any evidence. This was followed on Aug. 16 by raids on both men's homes, along with that of former defense minister Suh Wook (no relation).

The accused vigorously [deny](#) the charges, claiming a political [conspiracy](#). This writer shares that [view](#). Regular readers know we hold no brief for Moon; we often criticized the nostalgic delusions of his *Nordpolitik*, after the hopes briefly raised by 2018's summits evaporated. But his administration's handling of these two tough cases is arguably defensible. A propos Lee Dae-jun, as interim Democratic Party (DP) leader Woo Sang-ho pointed out when refusing to support a PPP task force to probe Lee's death, Moon protested vigorously to Pyongyang; he even received a very rare apology from Kim Jong Un. As Woo said, this is "a case where we brought North Korea to its knees, not where we pussyfooted around it."

The fishermen's case is no less vexed. There seems no serious doubt as to the facts. Any ROK government (of whatever stripe) had no good options, given South Korean courts' reluctance to convict on the basis of confessions alone, the sole evidence in this case. While the attempt to deport them in secret was sneaky and probably illegal, imagine the uproar if these cold-blooded mass murderers, still young, had ended up walking free in South Korea.

[Debate](#) will continue to rage. We shall see if these cases come to court, and what ensues. Four aspects are worth pondering. First, since most if not all inter-Korean dealings are

technically illegal under the National Security Act (NSA), strict legal considerations alone hardly suffice. Second, ROK *Nordpolitik* has long been hobbled by a lack of bipartisanship. The new MOU, Kwon Young-se, recognized this on June 15 when he promised policies that would blend the best from past liberal and conservative administrations. Yet by going after its predecessors, Yoon's government is sending the opposite signal. Third, this kind of fracas will not improve inter-Korea relations—although those may now be broken beyond repair.

The fourth factor is national security. While it is natural for Lee's family to seek the full facts regarding his death, to reveal state secrets in this case may also risk informing North Korea exactly how, and how much, Southern military intelligence listens to their communications. The fear is that overall these proceedings may generate more heat than light.

Think You're the Doctor? Hell, You're the Disease!

Having briefly [reported](#) his election without comment in March, North Korea then ignored Yoon Suk Yeol for over four months—including his inauguration. That changed on July 27. In a speech marking what the DPRK celebrates as "the 69th anniversary of the great victory in the [Korean] War"—known to the rest of the world as the 1953 Armistice, and more properly seen as a draw or stalemate rather than either sides' triumph—Kim Jong Un for the first time mentioned his Southern counterpart by name. He was not complimentary: "We can no longer sit around seeing Yoon Suk Yeol and his military gangsters' misdemeanors." And he warned that, should the "military ruffians" venture a pre-emptive strike, the "Yoon Suk Yeol regime and its army will be annihilated."

Worse was to come. On Aug. 10, less than three months after first admitting an outbreak of COVID-19, North Korea convened a special meeting to declare the virus "eradicated." With this whole episode, indeed as so often with the DPRK, the real truth is hard to fathom. In particular, claimed death rates are impossibly low. Given that just a month later Kim Jong Un [announced](#) a fresh mask mandate from November, and suggested that people will for the first time be vaccinated, the war hardly seems over. The 'victory' proclaimed in August must be partial at best. Still, that was the message. And the messenger? None other than

Kim's sister Kim Yo Jong, familiar for her scabrous if quirky [commentaries](#), but this time making her first known public speech.



Figure 3 North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shakes hands with a health official in Pyongyang on Aug. 10, 2022 after declaring victory over COVID-19 and ordering an easing of preventive measures. Photo: KCNA/KNS via AP

And what a speech it was, in content and tone alike. That was not fully conveyed by KCNA's English translation, which not only omitted important details of substance—notably, that Kim Jong Un himself caught a “high fever” (presumably COVID-19) while toiling tirelessly for the people—but also toned down her obscenities. Fortunately, the indispensable NK News published a full and unexpurgated [version](#), for subscribers. Bear in mind, then, that the official translation reproduced below as Appendix II, which pulls no punches, is milder than what Kim actually said.

The gist, and its pertinence here, is as simple as it is stunningly perverse. Whom did the First Sister blame for the virus entering North Korea? Not the obvious source, China: the one nation with which the DPRK has maintained interaction (though much reduced), and whose “zero COVID” policy has not prevented outbreaks in border areas like Dandong. Instead, she castigated the “puppet conservative gangsters” in South Korea for their “farce of scattering leaflets, bank notes, dirty booklets and other shit over our territory.” Seriously. This really has to be read in full to be believed—or rather disbelieved, since it is altogether implausible. The wider political message could not be clearer, and Kim hammered it home. South Korea is an eternal enemy; no one must have any illusions about that.



Figure 4 Activist group Fighters for a Free North Korea (FFNK) claims that on June 5 it sent 20 balloons carrying COVID-19 related supplies—20,000 masks, 30,000 vitamin C pills and 15,000 pain-killers—across the DMZ. It also sent posters denouncing Kim Jong Un as a hypocrite for blaming the spread of COVID-19 on leaflets from South Korea. Photo: Yonhap

In the circumstances, it was perhaps unwise for Yoon Suk Yeol in his Liberation Day speech to renew his “audacious plan,” still almost wholly devoid of detail, though in July MOU [fleshed](#) it out a bit in a new Work Plan). And it was definitely foolhardy, days after Kim Yo Jong had told the South exactly what she thought of them, for Seoul to press Pyongyang for a response. Be careful what you wish for. Kim swiftly riposted, firing the other barrel in her more familiar format of a press statement (Appendix III). This time the language was less vulgar, but just as rude: her contempt was undimmed. Once again the message was clear-cut, and unremittingly negative. Again this deserves perusal in full. Bottom line: “We don't like Yoon Suk Yeol...Though he may knock at the door with [whatever] large plan in the future as his ‘bold plan’ does not work, we make it clear that we will not sit face to face with him.”

Exports: A Northern Year is a Southern Hour (Almost)

The DPRK stopped publishing regular statistics in the 1960s, when its initially rapid postwar economic growth began to slow down. Since 1991 the Bank of Korea (BOK), South Korea's central bank, has tried to fill the gap by issuing annual estimates of the North's gross domestic product (GDP) and other data. This exercise has its [critics](#): methodology and data sources are both unclear. But it is arguably better than nothing, and suggestive of trends over time.

BOK's latest [report](#), published on July 27, reckons that in 2021 North Korean GDP fell 0.1% compared to 2020. That is progress, given that

in three of the four preceding years (2017–20) it had shrunk by between 3.5 and 4.5%. While sectoral details are beyond our scope, the inter-Korean differences in industrial structure are striking. Agriculture, which in South Korea like most advanced economies has become minuscule—a mere 2% of GDP in 2021—in North Korea still constitutes almost a quarter of the economy (23.8%). Conversely, the service sector comprises 62.5% in the South, but barely half as much in the North (32.9%).

The economic chasm between the Koreas just keeps widening. BOK tallied North Korea's total GDP in 2021 at 36.3 trillion Southern won (KRW). It eschews a dollar figure, but this is equivalent to \$31.7 billion. South Korea's figure was fully 58 times higher. Granted the South has more than twice as many people, but even on a per capita basis the ratio was 28:1.

In trade, the gulf is astronomical. Here BOK is on more solid factual ground thanks to partner countries' statistics, even if some transactions are doubtless hidden. The double whammy of sanctions and COVID restrictions—the DPRK all but closed its borders to trade, as well as people—has wrought huge harm. Though nowhere near ROK levels, by 2014 North Korea's total trade had reached \$7.6 billion. Seven years later it had plunged to less than a tenth of that (\$710 million), almost all imports. Recorded exports were a paltry \$80 million. South Korea's exports in 2021, by contrast, were worth \$644.4 billion: almost 8,000 times more. Put another way, what the North exported in a year was barely more than the South managed in one hour.

Budget Ups and (Mostly) Downs

On Aug. 30, South Korea's Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF) published its proposed [budget](#) for 2023: the first of Yoon's administration. This is subject to approval by the National Assembly, which remains controlled by the liberal opposition Democrats (DPK). For the first time in 13 years, total spending is set to [fall](#) rather than rise: from 679.5 trillion won this year (including two supplementary budgets) to 639 trillion won (\$473.5 billion), a drop of 6%. Within this, for the first time since 2018 MOU's rather small allocation is also set to fall, from 1.5 to 1.45 trillion won. However, the humanitarian aid component is set to rise 15.1% to 751 billion won (\$558 million), to finance Yoon's "audacious

initiative." As under Moon Jae-in, the prospect of such funds being disbursed is remote. Meanwhile defense spending is slated to rise 4.6% to 57.1 trillion won (\$42.3 billion), a sum larger than North Korea's entire GDP.

Conclusion: New/Old Blocs + New Nuclear Doctrine = Less Risk?

Prospects for inter-Korean relations could hardly be bleaker. Even so, "never say never" is a salutary watchword. North Korea excoriated past rightwing ROK leaders even more viciously, depicting Lee Myung-bak (president 2008–13) as a rat being bloodily murdered, and calling Park Geun-hye (2013–17) a whore. Some North-South contacts, not always public, continued in both cases.

That said, the current conjuncture is more than just a matter of routine ups and downs, or swings from left to right. The peninsula is entering a new phase, driven by wider geopolitics and North Korea's choices. Worsening US-China tensions and Russia's invasion of Ukraine are creating a new Cold War line-up of blocs. Interestingly, Kim Jong Un has embraced this. A state which under his father and grandfather shrilly proclaimed its autonomy (*Juche*) now emphasizes instead its unstinting support for both its big brothers in Beijing and Moscow. In the latter case, this has gone as far as officially recognizing the so-called "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk. In Korean terms, that looks a lot like [flunkeyism](#) (*sadaejuui*). It is a striking change from Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, who tried to balance the DPRK's relations between different powers. Kim Jong Un may reckon these are different times, and he could be right. Another change is that as a nuclear power North Korea can no longer be pushed around.

If this analysis is correct, then nothing any ROK government—left or right—may do is going to impress Kim or change his mind. This is the lesson of the last four years, and maybe the next four as well. A canny leader in Seoul should however be vigilant for any opportunity, while keeping his powder dry. Further down the line, Kim may chafe at being in thrall to the dragon and the bear. But after so many betrayals, rebuilding trust will be hard.

Even the latest ominous development may be tempered by this new context. In September the

DPRK [unveiled](#), indeed codified as [law](#), an alarming new nuclear doctrine, whose thrust is to expand the contexts in which Pyongyang reserves the right to use its weapons. This must surely [kill](#) any last faint hopes of denuclearization. On this issue, as with his embrace of neo-blocism (forgive the phrase), Kim has made a clear and firm choice which he will not reverse.

What will be interesting is how these two aspects interact. Paradoxically, despite the danger posed by North Korea's ever-expanding arsenal, Kim's embrace of China and Russia may be a restraining influence. Whatever their own nefarious purposes, neither Beijing nor Moscow wants to be distracted by irresponsible adventurism in Korea—as happened in 1950. At all events, for the foreseeable future inter-Korean relations will be largely driven by these wider trends and alignments. Yoon's "audacious plan" has scant chance of coming to fruition.

Appendix:

I. Extract from President Yoon Suk Yeol's Liberation Day [address](#), Aug. 15

Freedom—the spirit of our independence movement—builds peace, and peace defends freedom.

Peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia is an important prerequisite for global peace and serves as the foundation for protecting and expanding our freedom and that of global citizens.

Denuclearization of North Korea is essential for sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula, in Northeast Asia and around the world.

The audacious initiative that I envision will significantly improve North Korea's economy and its people's livelihoods in stages if the North ceases the development of its nuclear program and embarks on a genuine and substantive process for denuclearization.

We will implement a large-scale food program; provide assistance for power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure; and carry out projects to modernize ports and airports for international trade. We will also help enhance North Korea's agricultural productivity, offer assistance to modernize hospitals and medical infrastructure, and implement international investment and financial support initiatives.

[continues]

II. Kim Yo Jong's speech, Aug. 10

Official KCNA [translation](#). In fact, this is both shortened and considerably toned down. For a full and unexpurgated translation by Jeongmin Kim, see [NK News](#).

Pyongyang, August 11 (KCNA) -- Kim Yo Jong, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, made a speech at the national meeting of reviewing the emergency anti-epidemic work.

During the days of the extremely stern anti-epidemic campaign, the respected Comrade Kim

Jong Un convened a series of meetings of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee to protect the lives of our dear people, in which he personally came up with packages of various measures and ways, and visited anti-epidemic theatres day and night to teach clear-cut methods, she recalled, noting that during the 91 days-long arduous campaign reminiscent of a war, the respected General Secretary scrutinized more than 1 772 documents of 22 956 pages to guide the anti-epidemic campaign of the country.

Under his energetic and meticulous guidance the Party information field has concentrated all its information and motivational forces on letting all the people harden their faith in sure victory and renew their will to boldly tide over the pandemic-brought health crisis, and gained new experience and set fresh examples to fulfill its role as a powerful loudspeaker and noiseless amplifier absolutely faithful to the Party Central Committee, she stressed.

Saying that our country and people brought about an epoch-making miracle of defusing the unprecedented health crisis within the shortest period in the face of the worst difficulties under the outstanding guidance of the great leader, she went on:

Today's proud success proves once again that we can remain unfazed by any disaster and overcome it without fail as long as we are under the wise guidance of the Party Central Committee, and more clearly shows the tremendous might of our country in which the Party and the people are united in one mind.

Pointing out that the recent national hardship sustained by us was definitely attributable to the hysteric farce kicked off by the enemy to escalate the confrontation with our Republic with the global health crisis as a momentum, she said:

Now that many countries in the world are taking more effective anti-epidemic measures, realizing once again the danger of the spread of the malignant pandemic disease through contact with the objects infected with the malicious virus, it is a matter of grave concern that the disgusting ones in south Korea stage a farce of scattering leaflets, bank notes, awful booklets and things over our territory.

It is the universally accepted opinion of the international community that it is necessary to thoroughly disinfect the surface of objects as the malignant virus spreads via objects.

Such scientific clarification can never change no matter how desperately anyone may deny.

As we explained the root cause of the spread of the malignant disease not long ago, its first outbreak was reported in an area near the front. This fact aroused our deep concern and pushed us to suspect the despicable ones in south Korea. As all things concerned indicate a place too clearly in the light of background and circumstances, it is quite natural for us to consider strange objects as vehicles of the malignant pandemic disease.

It is an undeniable fact that a single person or a single object infected with the highly contagious virus may infect many other people in a moment and cause a grave health crisis.

From this scientific view, we come to draw a conclusion that we can no longer overlook the uninterrupted influx of rubbish from south Korea.

This is just an unethical crime.

What matters is the fact that the south Korean puppets are still thrusting leaflets and dirty objects into our territory.

We must counter it toughly.

We have already considered various counteraction plans but our countermeasure must be a deadly retaliatory one.

If the enemy persists in such dangerous deeds as fomenting the inroads of virus into our Republic, we will respond to it by not only exterminating the virus but also wiping out the south Korean authorities.

The south Korean puppets are, indeed, the invariable principal enemy of us and the fundamental factor that determines victory and failure of the revolutionary struggle is class consciousness.

We, officials in the Party information field, will conduct class education more intensively and offensively to further fuel the soaring anger and

burning wrath of all the people and thus firmly defend this land by turning it into the invincible class fortress and dear home for the people's happiness and good health.

She in her speech pledged to make the priceless successes gained in the anti-epidemic campaign a new turning occasion for further consolidating the political and ideological might of the Party and the revolutionary ranks and more vigorously advancing our revolutionary cause.

-0-

III. "Don't have an absurd dream": Kim Yo Jong's Press Statement, Aug. 18

Official KCNA [translation](#)

Pyeongyang, August 19 (KCNA) -- Kim Yo Jong, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), released the following press statement "Don't have an absurd dream" on August 18:

It would have been more favorable for his image to shut his mouth, rather than talking nonsense as he had nothing better to say.

I am talking about Yoon Suk Yeol's "commemorative speech marking August 15."

In his situation where he is losing the public support, it would have been better if he had never presented himself on that occasion.

I'm only saying this today because the south seems to be very eager to know of our reaction and not because I'm concerned of Yoon's situation, as even a mere child would know.

If he had really wanted to take the platform, I'm curious to know how much effort he had put in to his speech to be unable to say anything that would save his dignity.

This time, Yoon focused on clamoring about "a course of building a free country by fighting against communist forces" and "defending the free world by facing against communist invasion" and inciting confrontation between systems.

Although I'm sorry to say this, dogs will always bark, as a pup or an adult, and the same goes for the one with the title of "president."

The most repulsive point was when he recited absurd words impertinently of proposing us a "bold and broad-based plan" to radically improve the economy and public welfare if we would stop nuclear development and turn towards substantial denuclearization.

With the person who had at one time pretended to be "driver," questioning the public, gone, another who also lives in his own world has appeared to sit upon the throne.

Although he seemed to have gone through a lot of troubles after pretending to have a plan on improving the north-south relations during his "inaugural address" in May and then explaining it to the U.S. and neighboring countries to explain himself and asking for understanding and support for it, the "plan" he had laid down this time is truly absurd.

All the ridiculous remarks uttered by the so-called "president" really make the south look marvelous only.

Is a certain Yoon the only person who could be elected as "president"?

"Bold plan?"

In a word, I can explain why it is absurd.

His "bold plan" is the height of absurdity as it is an impracticable one to create mulberry fields in the dark blue ocean.

He disregarded the other party's attitude towards the plan and the comments which will be made on it by those grasping the situation of the inter-Korean ties. I could not but be stunned by his "bravery" and excessive ignorance

I'd love to give some advices.

The "bold plan" is not a new one, but a replica of "denuclearization, opening and 3 000" raised by traitor Lee Myung Bak 10-odd years ago only to be forsaken as a product of the confrontation with fellow countrymen, far from attracting the attention of world people.

The fact that he copied the policy towards the north, thrown into the dustbin of history, and called it "bold plan" shows that he is really foolish.

I'm not sure that he knows his assumption "if the north took a measure for denuclearization" was a wrong prerequisite.

All the predecessors in the south and even their master the U.S. failed to "make the north abandon nukes," but he uttered pipedream-like remarks, which made him look so miserable as we wondered why he quickly read the text that must be wrongly written, not knowing what it means.

All can not be bartered. To think that the plan to barter "economic cooperation" for our honor, nukes, is the great dream, hope and plan of Yoon, we came to realize that he is really simple and still childish.

He, who came to power, would take two or three years to know well the law of the world and the situation while working hard.

No one barter its destiny for corn cake.

Bitter contempt is what we will only show those spinning a pipedream to succeed in making us abandon our nukes if they pay more stakes.

It would be advisable to mind their own business if they can find time to spare, not talking about the north-south issue.

They would have no time to talk about someone's "economy" and improvement of "people's livelihood" since they may be ousted anytime for their spoiled economy and public welfare.

Those villains seriously encroaching on our security circumstance by continuing to infiltrate dirty wastes into our territory talk about "food supply" and "medical assistance" to inhabitants in the north. Such deeds will only incite our people's surging hatred and wrath.

A knave who talks about "bold plan" today and stages anti-north war exercises tomorrow is none other than "mastermind" Yoon Suk Yeol.

It is our earnest desire to live without awareness of each other.

Before evaluating the south Korean authorities' "policy toward the north," we don't like Yoon Suk Yeol himself.

Though he may knock at the door with what large plan in the future as his "bold plan" does not work, we make it clear that we will not sit face to face with him.

It would be good for Yoon Suk Yeol to ponder over what serious threat the reckless confrontational remarks his hirelings have made irregularly and ignorantly will bring.

Yoon should not forget our advice even a moment that it would be good never to stand face to face with us.

In addition, we made it clear that the previous day's weapon test was conducted on the "Kumsong Bridge" in Anju City of South Phyongan Province, not the Onchon area the south Korean authorities announced rashly and talkatively.

I am curious to know why those always talking about the pursuit surveillance and full preparedness under the close cooperation between south Korea and U.S. could not indicate the launching time and place properly and why they do not open to the public data on the weapon system.

If the data and flight trajectory are known, the south will be so bewildered and afraid. And it will be a thing worthy of seeing how they will explain about it before their people. -0-

CHRONOLOGY OF NORTH KOREA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 4, 2022: Both the outgoing and soon-to-be ROK governments condemn the DPRK's latest missile [launch](#) today, its 14th this year. The presidential National Security Council (NSC) [calls on](#) Pyongyang "to stop its actions that pose serious threats." President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol's transition team [promises](#) "more fundamental deterrence measures."

May 4, 2022: Lee Jong-sup, the former three-star general who is Yoon's nominee to be minister of National Defense (MND), [tells](#) his parliamentary confirmation hearing that South Korea could be a nuclear target for North Korea. (See also May 8.)

May 7, 2022: In North Korea's 15th missile launch this year, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) [report](#) an apparent submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) test in waters near the east coast city of Sinpo. This flew 600 km, reaching 60km in altitude. (The DPRK's last SLBM test was in October.) The JCS says it is "maintaining a full readiness posture." Incoming National Security Adviser (NSA) Kim Sung-han [says](#) the Yoon administration will reassess the DPRK's WMD threat, to "come up with fundamental measures against North Korea's provocations and actual deterrence capabilities against its nuclear missile threats."

May 8, 2022: Incoming MND Lee Jong-sup [tells](#) his National Assembly confirmation hearing that North Korea is an "evident" enemy, given its nuclear and missile threats.

May 10, 2022: Yoon Suk Yeol of the People Power Party (PPP) is [inaugurated](#) president of South Korea for a single five-year term, succeeding Moon Jae-in (2017-2022). Moon's Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) still [controls](#) the National Assembly.

May 11, 2022: Yoon [picks](#) Kim Kyou-hyun, a career diplomat and onetime deputy national security adviser, as head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), succeeding Park Jie-won.

Kwon Chun-taek, a former NIS official and diplomat, will be first deputy director, a job largely focused on North Korea. Kim must undergo a parliamentary confirmation hearing; he is duly [approved](#) on May 26.

May 12, 2022: Sources [tell](#) the quasi-official news agency *Yonhap* that, by order of Defense Minister Lee, the ROK military will revert to calling DPRK missile tests "provocations," a term avoided under Moon. Seoul will also refer to "unidentified ballistic missiles" rather than "unidentified projectiles." In a similar hardening of tone, the presidential National Security Office (NSO) "strongly [condemns](#)" Pyongyang's latest missile launch today, and "deplore[s] North Korea's two-faced actions" of continuing ballistic missile provocations while neglecting its people's lives and safety amid a coronavirus outbreak.

May 13, 2022: A day after the DPRK [admits](#) an outbreak of COVID-19, Yoon [offers](#) to send COVID-19 vaccines. His spokesperson says: "We will hold discussions with the North Korean side about details." The North today [reports](#) six deaths, and that a total of 350,000 people "got fever in a short span of time," with 18,000 new cases on May 12 alone; 187,800 "are being isolated and treated." One of Yoon's officials tells reporters on background: "We know more than what was announced. It's more serious than thought."

May 16, 2022: Yoon [repeats](#) offer of aid to fight COVID-19: "We must not hold back...we will not spare any necessary support." While that offer is unconditional, he notes that the security situation is worsening and calls for "a sustainable peace under which the process of North Korea's denuclearization and inter-Korean trust building form a virtuous cycle."

May 16, 2022: MOU [says](#) Pyongyang has been "unresponsive" to its offer to cooperate against COVID-19. At the regular daily 9 a.m. test call on the liaison office communication line, Seoul

conveys its wish to fax a letter signed by Minister Kwon Young-se at 11 a.m. The second daily call at 5 p.m. passes without the North clarifying whether it would accept this message. The ROK Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) says the South has ample stocks of vaccine to share; adding that the North's outbreak is "probably much more serious than what has been announced."

May 18, 2022: Kim Tae-hyo, first deputy chief of the ROK's presidential National Security Office (NSO), [says](#) a North Korean ICBM test looks "imminent."

May 19, 2022: According to South Korean lawmakers after a confidential briefing—promptly leaked to the media, as usual in Seoul—the NIS [reckons](#) North Korea has completed preparations for a nuclear test, "and they're gauging the timing." NIS also [assesses](#) that Kim Jong Un is unlikely to have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

May 19, 2022: *Yonhap* [reports](#) that MND will reinstate the original "hawkish names" for two elements of South Korea's "three-axis" defense system against Northern WMD: Kill Chain, and Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR. The third is Korea Air and Missile Defense). Under Moon Jae-in these were renamed as "strategic target strike" and "overwhelming response," respectively. A spokesman says reviving the old names adds "clarity."

May 19, 2022: Three Southern NGOs [offer](#) medical aid worth 12 billion won (\$10 million) to help North Korea fight COVID-19. Urging Pyongyang to accept, they say they will reach out via "all [possible] routes." Meanwhile, MOU [notes](#) that for a fourth day the North has stayed silent regarding the South's bid to send a formal offer of assistance.

May 20, 2022: According to a poll by *Gallup Korea*, 72% of South Koreans [support](#) helping North Korea tackle COVID-19, while 22% are opposed. Those in their 20s are evenly split.

May 20, 2022: ROK Ministry of Unification (MOU) [says](#) it is trying to confirm media reports that five DPRK border crossers have been arrested in Dandong, China. MOU restates South Korea's position: "North Korean defectors living

abroad can go to any place they desire of their own free will."

May 24, 2022: On the 12th anniversary of the "May 24 measures," whereby Seoul banned almost all inter-Korean trade (except at the then Kaesong Industrial Complex) in retaliation for the sinking of the ROKN frigate *Cheonan*, MOU [says](#) these sanctions "can be reviewed in accordance with a principles-based and practical approach"—but will remain in effect for now. Meanwhile, at a press conference outside the ministry, entrepreneurs who pioneered North-South commerce protest at the loss of their livelihood: "Over 1,000 businessmen are living miserably, with several having gone bankrupt or turned into delinquent borrowers."

May 25, 2022: Hours after President Biden leaves the region, North Korea [launches](#) three missiles – including a suspected ICBM—off its east coast. Shortly afterward, the US and South Korea fire two missiles: their first such joint response since 2017

May 28, 2022: In his first media interview since taking office, Yoon [tells](#) CNN that, as they headline it, the "age of appeasing North Korea is over." He adds: "I think the ball is in Chairman Kim [Jong Un]'s court—it is his choice to start a dialogue with us."

May 30, 2022: On his first visit to the defense ministry and the JCS, President Yoon [says](#) he appreciates their dedication and calls for "a firm military readiness posture [to] be maintained."

May 30, 2022: Unnamed officials [tell](#) *Yonhap* that on May 9 (before Yoon took office) MND began distributing new troop instruction materials referring to the North Korean military and regime as "our enemy," after incoming minister Lee Jong-sup called for "clear education" on this point. Under Moon Jae-in the E-word was eschewed, in favor of "real military threats." MND is canvassing opinion on whether its next defense White Paper should also revert to naming the North as an enemy.

June 4, 2022: JCS [announces](#) that on June 2-4 the ROK and US held their first joint exercises including a US aircraft carrier for over four years, in international waters off Okinawa. The drills involved air defense, anti-ship, anti-submarine, and maritime interdiction operations.

June 5, 2022: A day after the US-ROK navy drill ends, North Korea [fires](#) eight short-range missiles (SRBMs) from four different locations into the East Sea/Sea of Japan. Distances flown range between 110 and 670 km, with altitude varying from 25 to 90 km. This is the DPRK's 18th missile launch this year, its third since Yoon took office, and the largest batch of missiles Pyongyang has launched on one day.

June 6, 2022: US and South Korea [riposte](#) by firing eight missiles—ground-to-ground Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS)—in a 10-minute pre-dawn burst from a single location in Gangwon-do on the east coast.

June 7, 2022: In a further reaction, the US and South Korea [stage](#) a combined demonstration of air power involving 20 planes over the Yellow Sea. Four USAF F-16 fighters join 16 ROKAF combat aircraft, including F-35A stealth fighters, F-15Ks and KF-16s.

June 7, 2022: Activist group Fighters for a Free North Korea (FFNK) [claims](#) that on June 5 it sent 20 balloons carrying COVID-19 related supplies—20,000 masks, 30,000 vitamin C pills and 15,000 pain-killers—across the DMZ. In a change of tone but not message from the Moon era, MOU says that while “we fully understand the group's efforts to help North Koreans,” such actions are unhelpful—and illegal under the Development of Inter-Korean Relations Act. A police investigation is launched.

June 8-10, 2022: North Korea's ruling Workers' Party (WPK) holds Fifth Enlarged Plenary Meeting of its Eighth Central Committee (their capitals). A wide-ranging agenda includes personnel reshuffles. Choe Son Hui, a seasoned negotiator with the US, becomes the DPRK's first female minister of foreign affairs, replacing Ri Son Gwon, who takes charge of inter-Korean relations as head of the United Front Department (UFD).

June 12, 2022: Following media reports that North Korea test-fired multiple rocket launchers (MRLs) earlier today, the JCS belatedly [says](#) it observed “trails” consistent with that.

June 13, 2022: ROK presidential office [adds](#) that the NSO met yesterday, while the suspected MRL test was ongoing, and discussed it. President Yoon did not attend.

June 14, 2022: Commenting (on background) on the new DPRK foreign minister, an MOU official [cautions](#): “It is difficult to construe the replacement of a particular official as being necessarily related to any change in North Korea's external policy.” The Sejong Institute's Cheong Seong-chang notes Ri Son Gwon's past [hawkishness](#), and even [rudeness](#), toward Seoul. His reassignment may presage a renewed anti-South offensive.

June 14, 2022: Lee Young-hoon, senior pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC), the largest Pentecostal denomination in Korea, [says](#) the DPRK has asked the church to build ‘people's hospitals’ in all its 260 counties. He offers no details. YFGC began constructing a cardiac hospital in Pyongyang in 2007, but work stopped after 2010's [Cheonan incident](#). In November YFGC obtained a UN sanctions waiver to send some 1,500 medical and related items to North Korea; this has yet to take place.

June 15, 2022: On the 22nd anniversary of the Joint [Declaration](#), adopted at the first North-South summit in Pyongyang in June 2000 by then-leaders Kim Jong Il and Kim Dae-jung, MOU Kwon Young-se [pledges](#) a consistent stance: “[Our] policy on North Korea will open a new path that embraces the flexibility shown by the previous liberal administrations, as well as a stable stance kept by conservative administrations in the past.” He calls on Pyongyang to respect inter-Korean agreements and desist from military provocations.

June 15, 2022: North Korea's Committee to Uphold the June 15 Joint Declaration [sends](#) a message to its Southern counterpart: “The conservative force that newly took power in the South has taken itself as an assault force for the realization of the US' hostile policy.”

June 16, 2022: Unexpectedly resurrecting the case of Lee Dae-jun (see [here](#) for details), the ROK Coast Guard now [says](#) “no evidence was found to confirm his intention to defect.” It apologizes for imputing that motive at the time. MND reassesses the case similarly. The (NSO) withdraws an appeal, filed under Moon Jae-in, against a court order to disclose classified information about Lee's death to his family.

June 17, 2022: PPP says it will launch a task force into Lee Dae-jun's death, and calls for Moon Jae-in to be investigated. Refusing to cooperate,

opposition leader Woo Sang-ho says Moon “strongly protested” to the North and got “a rare apology” from Kim Jong Un: “It is a case where we brought North Korea to its knees, not where we pussyfooted around it.”

June 21, 2022: Reviving a second inter-Korean incident considered closed, Yoon strongly [hints](#) that his administration may investigate his predecessor Moon Jae-in’s repatriation in 2019 of two North Korean fishermen, who had allegedly killed 16 of their crewmates: “Haven’t the people had many questions about it?” (See also July 12 and thereafter.)

June 21, 2022: In his first press conference, MOU Kwon Young-se [says](#): “I will try harder to shift the currently chilled inter-Korean ties into a phase of dialogue...I am willing to meet with the head of [North Korea’s] UFD, Ri Son Gwon, any time in any format.”

June 22, 2022: ROK Coast Guard’s head again [apologizes](#) for “causing misunderstanding” regarding the 2020 death of fisheries official Lee Dae-jun. Lee’s family [lodges](#) criminal complaints against three of ex-President Moon’s secretaries, including former National Security Advisor Suh Hoon, accusing them of dereliction of duty and obstruction.

June 24, 2022: ROK Prime Minister Han Duck-soo [tells](#) the Korean Peninsula Peace Symposium that (in *Yonhap*’s summary) “Seoul intends to normalize inter-Korean relations through a bold plan for substantial denuclearization and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, while upholding the principles of its relations with Pyongyang.”

June 28, 2022: Seoul [says](#) it has not succeeded in sending an official message asking to be notified before Pyongyang discharges water from its dams, as seems to have happened after recent heavy rains. This morning the inter-Korean hotline was not working, possibly due to flood damage. It was restored by the afternoon, but the North did not agree to accept the message – which was instead conveyed informally and verbally, via a separate military hotline. After six South Koreans [drowned](#) in flash floods in 2009 caused by such a discharge, the two Koreas agreed to notify each other in future before doing this.

June 29, 2022: MOU [says](#) that although the inter-Korean liaison hotline is operational, the North is still unresponsive to efforts to fax a formal request to be notified before dam waters are released.

June 30, 2022: MOU [confirms](#) “it is presumed that North Korea has recently opened the floodgates of Hwanggang Dam.” However, water levels on the Imjin River remain stable.

July 4, 2022: ROK JCS [says](#) it is “paying keen attention” and watching out for any sign of Korean Peoples’ Army (KPA) summer drills, usually held in July. So far it has only seen small-scale “related maneuvers,” perhaps due to recent torrential rain.

July 4, 2022: In a speech marking the 50th anniversary of the first South-North Joint Statement, MOU Kwon [says](#) his government will seek a “new structure” of inter-Korean dialogue, including nuclear talks: “We cannot just sit on our hands and leave nuclear negotiations to the international community.”

July 4, 2022: Marking the same anniversary, DPRK Today [says](#): “Until this day, a vicious cycle of confrontation and tension has repeated itself on the Korean Peninsula.” It blames “the South Korean authorities who have neglected the three principles for national unification of autonomy, peace, and solidarity of the Korean nation, and failed to faithfully implement the inter-Korean agreement.”

July 5, 2022: ROK’s new JCS Chairman, army Gen. Kim Seung-kyum, [warns](#): “If North Korea provokes, our military will definitely have it pay a hefty price...through unsparing retaliation....(We) will inscribe even onto its bones (the message) that there’s nothing to gain from provocations.”

July 6, 2022: In similar tough-talking vein, at his first meeting with top military commanders (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, plus the MND and JCS chairman), President Yoon [orders](#) them “to swiftly and firmly punish North Korea [if] it carries out a provocation.”

July 7, 2022: FFNK [says](#) it has again sent balloons carrying supplies to fight the pandemic across the DMZ. Besides 70,000 painkillers, 30,000 vitamin C tablets, and 20,000 masks, it also includes posters saying “We denounce Kim

Jong Un, a hypocrite who let the vicious infectious disease from China spread and put the blame on anti-North leaflets.” MOU again urges FFNK to cease such activities.

July 12, 2022: MOU [publishes](#) unseen photographs of the repatriation of DPRK fishermen at Panmunjom in Nov. 2019. Though heavily pixelated, the [images](#) show the men bound and blindfolded; one tries to resist as they are handed over. [Video](#) footage is released on July 18.

July 13, 2022: Yoon’s presidential office [condemns](#) its predecessor’s repatriation of the fishermen as a potential “crime against humanity,” and vows a full investigation.

July 14, 2022: Both MOU and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) [say](#) there was no legal basis for Moon Jae-in’s government to repatriate the two fishermen to North Korea.

July 19, 2022: South Korea [reopens](#) Panmunjom to journalists and tourists, after a six-month hiatus due to COVID-19. UN Command (UNC) guides note that for two years since the pandemic began, DPRK troops have hardly emerged from their buildings. The Northern side, formerly well maintained and neat, is overgrown with weeds and unkempt.

July 19, 2022: Ministry of Foreign Affairs [names](#) Lee Shin-hwa, professor at Korea University, as the ROK’s first ambassador for North Korean human rights since 2017. Moon Jae-in’s government left the position vacant, as part of its drive to engage Pyongyang.

July 22, 2022: MOU issues a fresh 2022 [Work Plan](#), reflecting the new government’s stance. While claiming to address North Korea’s security concerns, the official summary—to “pursue peaceful unification based on the basic free and democratic order to realize a denuclearized, peaceful and prosperous Korean Peninsula”—can hardly appeal to Pyongyang. Nor will plans for a new foundation on DPRK human rights. More interesting is a tentative [proposal](#) to [unban](#) DPRK media in the ROK, supposedly in hopes that the North might follow suit.

July 25, 2022: MND Lee [tells](#) Parliament that since the 2018 North-South accords, when Kim Jong Un committed to denuclearization, North Korea is reckoned to have grown its stockpile of

fissile materials (plutonium and highly enriched uranium) by 10%.

July 27, 2022: Bank of Korea (BoK), South Korea’s central bank, publishes annual [estimates](#) of North Korea’s economy. It reckons Northern GDP fell by 0.1% last year: an improvement on 2020’s minus 4.5%. The inter-Korean trade gap – actual, not estimated – is now unimaginably wide. In 2021 South Korea exported almost as much every hour as North Korea managed in the entire year.

July 27, 2022: In a [speech](#) on what the DPRK celebrates as “the 69th anniversary of the great victory in the [Korean] War,” otherwise known as the 1953 Armistice, Kim Jong Un for the first time mentions his ROK counterpart by name: “We can no longer sit around seeing Yoon Suk Yeol and his military gangsters’ misdemeanors.” Should the “military ruffians” venture a pre-emptive strike, the “Yoon [Suk Yeol] regime and its army will be annihilated.”

July 28, 2022: ROK NSO [responds](#), with notable restraint: “We express deep regret that Chairman Kim Jong Un made threatening remarks at our government while mentioning the president by name.”

Aug. 1, 2022: Amid renewed controversy regarding the Moon administration’s deportation of two DPRK fishermen, MOU Kwon [says](#) the ROK should be clear on the principle that it accepts “all” defectors. Kwon calls the 2019 incident a “forced repatriation.”

Aug. 1, 2022: South Korea’s arms procurement agency, the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA), [tells](#) the National Assembly it is working on almost 200—197, to be exact—separate projects to beef up defenses against North Korea’s evolving WMD threats.

Aug. 8, 2022: An MOU official [notes](#): “As rain has fallen heavily in North Korea, the North is repeatedly opening and closing the floodgates of Hwanggang Dam,” upstream on the Imjin river which flows into South Korea. As before Pyongyang did not notify Seoul. With northern South Korea [pounded](#) by the heaviest rain in 80 years, officials in ROK’s Gyeonggi province [warn](#) that the Imjin has risen dangerously.

Aug. 10, 2022: At a specially convened “national meeting of reviewing the emergency anti-epidemic work,” North Korea proclaims (as [KCNA headlines](#) it) a “Brilliant Victory Gained by Great People of DPRK.” Kim Jong Un declares the coronavirus “[eradicated](#).” In her first known public [speech](#) (as opposed to written commentary), his sister Kim Yo Jong praises her brother’s dedication, implying he too was infected. But she savages South Korea, in absurd and [obscene](#) terms, accusing the “puppet conservative gangsters” of infecting the North by “a farce of scattering leaflets, bank notes, dirty booklets and other shit over our territory.”

Aug. 11, 2022: Seoul [rebuffs](#) Pyongyang. MOU “expresses strong regret over North Korea’s insolent and threatening remarks based on repeated groundless claims regarding the inflow of the coronavirus.”

Aug. 15, 2022: In his [speech](#) for Liberation Day—from Japan in 1945; a public holiday in both Koreas—Yoon fleshes out his “audacious plan” to aid North Korea, slightly. (Appendix I contains his remarks in full.)

Aug. 16, 2022: MOU [says](#) it “urges and hopes” North Korea will respond to “our...sincere proposal for peace on the Korean Peninsula and the common prosperity of the South and the North.” But it has no plans to request working-level contact specifically about this.

Aug. 17, 2022: At a press conference marking his first 100 days in office, Yoon [clarifies](#) that his ‘audacious offer’ does not require North Korea’s complete denuclearization right away: “As long as they demonstrate firm commitment, we will do what we can do to help them.” He denies hostile intent: “[N]either I nor the Republic of Korea government wants the status quo changed unreasonably or by force in North Korea.”

Aug. 17, 2022: In its first missile test for over two months, North Korea [fires](#) two cruise missiles into the Yellow Sea. South Korea says these were launched from Onchon; Kim Yo Jong, mocking their inaccuracy, [corrects](#) this to Anju.

Aug. 18, 2022: MOU Kwon says his government will, as *Yonhap* [puts](#) it, “strive to create a condition for North Korea to embrace” President Yoon’s “audacious initiative.” Seoul plans to “to send more specific messages to the North, going forward.”

Aug. 18, 2022: Kim Yo Jong issues a further [statement](#), titled “Don’t have an absurd dream.” KCNA publishes this on Aug. 19. Contemptuously rejecting Yoon’s “bold plan” as a rehash of equally unacceptable past offers by “traitor Lee Myung-bak,” she adds: “We don’t like Yoon Suk Yeol...Though he may knock at the door with [whatever] large plan in the future as his ‘bold plan’ does not work, we make it clear that we will not sit face to face with him.”

Aug. 19, 2022: Responding to Kim Yo Jong’s broadside, South Korea’s presidential office [says](#): “We consider it very regrettable that North Korea continues to use rude language while mentioning the president by name, and continued to express its nuclear development intentions while distorting our ‘audacious plan.’”

Aug. 22, 2022: South Korea and the US [launch](#) *Ulchi Freedom Shield* (UFS): their first large field-training military exercises in four years. Normally annual, such maneuvers were scaled back or suspended for four years (2018–21) under Donald Trump and Moon Jae-in, partly for diplomatic reasons and also due to COVID-19. The exercise concludes on Sept. 1.

Aug. 24, 2022: Seoul Central District Court [finds](#) in favor of seven veterans and one widow, who in 2020 sued Kim Jong Un and the DPRK government over injuries and losses suffered during an inter-Korean naval [skirmish](#) off Yeonpyeong island in 2002. The defendants are ordered to pay 20 million won (\$14,886) to each complainant, plus 5% annual interest for the past 20 years. Like similar [cases](#) in the US, this is largely symbolic. (By an earlier Supreme Court ruling, North Korea, constitutionally defined as an anti-government organization, is regarded as a “juridical person” under the ROK Civil Procedure Act.)

Aug. 25, 2022: South Korea’s official [Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirms](#) that in Yeongam county in South Jeolla province, “local leftists and North Korean partisans” killed 133 civilians between August and November 1950, during the Korean War. According to *Yonhap*, the targets “were mostly police, civil servants, members of a right-wing youth group and other people classified as right-wingers and their families...Some people known to be wealthy and Christians were also sacrificed.” 41% of victims were female; 36% were children aged under 15.

Aug. 29, 2022: ROK DM Lee tells the National Assembly that, as *Yonhap*'s [headline](#) summarizes it: "N. Korea set for nuke test, but no sign of action yet."

Aug. 30, 2022: South Korea [reveals](#) its budget for 2023, the first under Yoon. Amid the first [fall](#) in overall spending for 13 years, MOU's budget suffers its first [cut](#) since 2018: down from 1.5 to 1.45 trillion won. Within this, the humanitarian [aid](#) component is set to rise 15.1% to 751 billion won (\$558 million), to finance Yoon's "audacious initiative." (As under Moon Jae-in, the prospect of such funds being disbursed is remote.) [Defense](#) spending is slated to rise 4.6% to 57.1 trillion won (\$42.3 billion): a sum larger than North Korea's entire GDP.