

Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Administration: Implementing Government Tasks

Dong-ho Han et al.

KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION



Korea Institute for
National Unification

Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Administration: Implementing Government Tasks

Dong-ho Han et al.

KINU

Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Administration: Implementing Government Tasks

Printed	June 2023
Published	June 2023
Published by	Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU)
Publisher	Yu-hwan Koh, President
Editor	Yeowon Lim, Research Associate
Registration number	No.2-2361 (April 23, 1997)
Address	217 Banpo-daero(Banpo-dong), Seocho-gu, Seoul 06578, Korea
Telephone	(82-2) 2023-8208
Fax	(82-2) 2023-8298
Homepage	https://www.kinu.or.kr
Design	Design Yeobaek Plus (82-2) 2672-1535
Print	Seilfocus (82-2) 2275-6894
ISBN	979-11-6589-137-4 93340 : Not for sale

Copyright © Korea Institute for National Unification, 2023

(Purchase Inquiry) Government Printing Office Sales Center:

Store: +82-2-734-6818. Office: +82-2-394-0337

Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Administration: Implementing Government Tasks

This English translation is an abbreviated and edited version of KINU Research Paper, *Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Administration: Implementing Government Tasks*, Dong-ho Han et al. (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, January 2023). The analysis, comments, and opinions presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Korea Institute for National Unification.

Table of Contents

⋮

1. Introduction	1
2. The Yoon Administration's Unification and North Korea Policies	5
3. Environment for Policy Execution	13
A. The Strategic Competition between the U.S. and China and the Arms Race in Northeast Asia	15
B. Advancement of North Korean Nuclear and Missile Capacities ...	16
C. The U.S.-China Competition in Supply Chain and Economic Security	17
4. Promoting the Denuclearization of North Korea	19
A. Denuclearization in North Korea and Developing a Peace Regime ..	21
B. Reinforcing International Cooperation	22
C. Developing Channels for Security Discussions among South Korea, North Korea, and the U.S.	26

Table of Contents

⋮

5. Normalization of Inter-Korean Relations and Establishing the Foundations for Unification	29
A. Normalization of Inter-Korean Relations	31
B. Strategies for Pursuing Inter-Korean Green Détente	32
C. Establishing the Foundations for Unification	34
 6. Resolving Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues	 37
A. Humanitarian Aid	39
B. Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues Including Separated Families ...	40
C. Improving North Korea's Human Rights	41
 7. Conclusion	 43

1

Introduction



KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

- This research explores ways to successfully and efficiently execute proposed national political agendas on unification and North Korea policies. The conditions surrounding the Korean Peninsula are posing uneasy challenges such as the strategic competition between the U.S. and China, arms race in Northeast Asia, competition among major countries on the global supply chain, the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, and emerging non-traditional security challenges such as climate change, among others. These conditions call for a more careful and strategic approach toward executing unification and North Korea policies.
- President Yoon has announced his “Audacious Initiative” regarding North Korea policies at the Independence Day speech followed by his suggestions on preemptive proposals towards North Korea during the first 100-days in office press conference. He disclosed his intention to provide comprehensive aid including the normalization of U.S.-North Korea relations under the condition that North Korea would stop nuclear development and express sincerity towards denuclearization.
- Amid the deterioration of the policy environment for inter-Korean relations, the government ought to execute its Audacious Initiative in a more consistent and stable manner. To provide practical support for policy execution, this study suggests directions for the policy environment and important directives on executing the Yoon administration’s unification and North Korea policies.

2

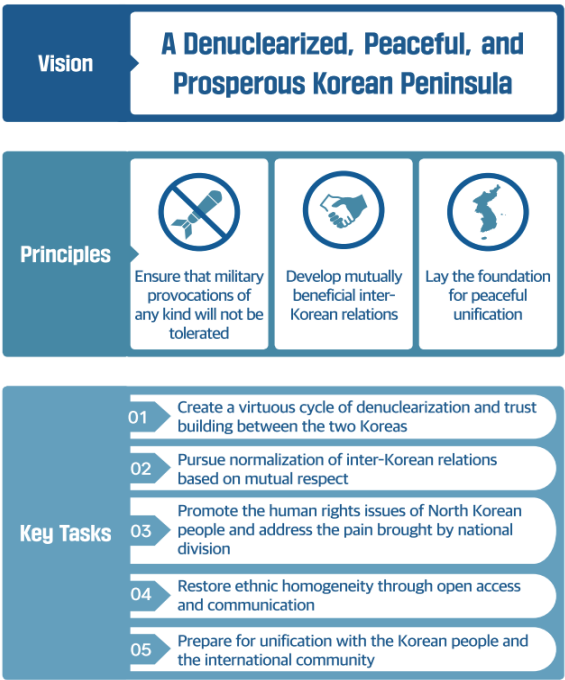
The Yoon Administration's Unification and North Korea Policies

KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

The Yoon administration’s unification and North Korea policies encompass the vision of a denuclearized, peaceful, and prosperous Korean Peninsula. In other words, by prioritizing the goal of denuclearization over the goals of peace and prosperity, the vision emphasizes the necessity of denuclearization for peace and prosperity in the Peninsula and the broader region. This emphasis is again highlighted by the fact that “creating a virtuous cycle of denuclearization and trust building between the two Koreas” has been given priority over other key tasks regarding unification and North Korea policies.

Figure II-1 The Executive Structure of the Yoon Administration’s Unification and North Korea Policies

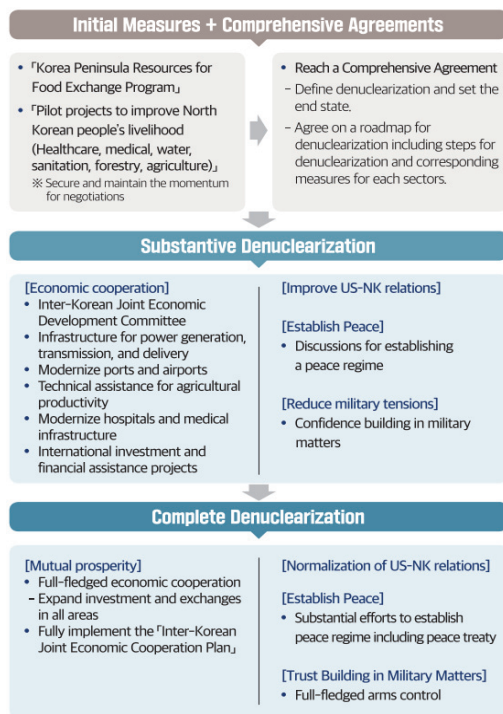


Source: Ministry of Unification, “A Denuclearized, Peaceful, and Prosperous Korean Peninsula: The Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Government” (English Edition), Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2022, p. 11.

- The following principles show the directions of the Yoon administration's unification and North Korea policies toward increasing deterrence against North Korea through reliable national security and, accordingly, widening the room for diplomatic maneuver, eventually developing the fundamentals for better inter-Korean relations and unification. The principles are: 1) ensuring that military provocations of any kind will not be tolerated, 2) developing mutually beneficial inter-Korean relations, and 3) laying the foundation for peaceful unification.
- As portrayed in Figure II-2, the most iconic feature of the Audacious Initiative is its structural focus on transforming the North Korean system. Rather than simply trying to change North Korea through economic incentives, it seeks to guide North Korea gradually to denuclearization through economic cooperation that includes political and military guarantees of security, efforts toward qualitative developments in inter-Korean relations, and the establishment of mid-to-long-term foundations for unification. To achieve these goals, the Initiative sets short-to-mid-term goals that include initial actions and distinguishes between de facto and complete denuclearization.
- At a glance, the Yoon administration's Audacious Initiative may seem similar to the previous Lee Myung-bak administration's Vision 3000: Denuclearization and Openness. However, while the latter has, as its initial offer, presented complete denuclearization as the ultimate goal with promises of corresponding economic rewards, the former, as its initial offer, presented North Korea's willingness to denuclearize as

its first demand with promises of not only economic but also political and military rewards.¹⁾ To summarize, the Audacious Initiative is distinguished from previous North Korea initiatives by the range of initial demands and rewards it presents in return for North Korean denuclearization.

Figure II-2 The Executive Structure of Yoon Suk Yeol administration's "Audacious Initiative"



Source: Ministry of Unification, "A Denuclearized, Peaceful, and Prosperous Korean Peninsula: The Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Government" (English Edition), Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2022, p. 21.

¹⁾ Ministry of Unification, "A Denuclearized, Peaceful, and Prosperous Korean Peninsula: The Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Government" (English Edition), Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2022, p. 32.

- Below, we present policy environments and task-specific executive initiatives for carrying out the Yoon administration's unification and North Korea policies.

3

Environment for Policy Execution

KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

A. The Strategic Competition between the U.S. and China and the Arms Race in Northeast Asia

- Since the 2010s, key countries including the U.S., China, and Russia have been involved in an arms race that overwhelms the scale of the Cold War era.
- Ever since the beginning of incumbency, the Biden administration has put great emphasis on developing a weapons control system against strategic and non-strategic weapons that heighten the instability of the arms race and the urgency of America's response against new strategic weaponry. The administration has brought to the forefront its goals of developing anti-Chinese siege and pressure fronts, reviewing its comprehensive deterrence preparation, and strengthening the military capacities of its allies and its own extended deterrence capacities.
- Simply put, the administration seeks to develop a structure for deterring the advancement of Chinese and Russian nuclear weapons and provide military aid to allies and partners to strengthen its alliance and cooperation fronts, ultimately to deter Chinese expansion to the South.
- With the U.S. simultaneously providing extended deterrence and preparing military capacities against North Korea, North Korea is utilizing these actions as a justification to realize its nuclear and missile capacities and strengthen the ties among North Korea, China, and Russia. If the U.S. continues to hold China in check and maintain its siege and pressure tactics, North Korea will likely utilize the situation as a justification to accelerate the advancement of its nuclear and missile

capacities.

B. Advancement of North Korean Nuclear and Missile Capacities

- In the 6th enlarged plenary session of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party held in December 2022, North Korea has declared its intentions to strengthen its anti-South Korean and anti-U.S. offensives by advancing national defense capacities and nuclear weapons. To advance nuclear and missile capacities, it has set long-term anti-South Korean offensives as its strategic agenda.
- As a means of developing long-term anti-U.S. and anti-South Korea systems, North Korea presented four aims in strengthening its national defense capacities: 1) reaffirming its offensive nuclear principles that consider the possibility of the actual use of nuclear weapons, 2) developing inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM) to strengthen its “expedited second-strike capabilities”, 3) expanding the method of nuclear weapon projection and increasing the stock of nuclear warheads, and 4) launching military reconnaissance satellites.
- If North Korea follows through with their aims after 2023, the situation in the Korean Peninsula will rapidly freeze, heightening military tensions. North Korea is seeking to build tension in the Peninsula to justify its advancement of nuclear and missile capacities and boast its anti-U.S. and anti-South Korean deterrence capacities. The strengthened ROK-U.S. extended deterrence and heightened response preparation from South Korea and the U.S. will exacerbate North Korea's

advancement of nuclear and missile capabilities, increasing the instability in the Peninsula.

C. The U.S.-China Competition in Supply Chain and Economic Security

- As a protest against the U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan on August 3, 2022, China has halted all exports of natural sand – used as building supplies and for making steel products – to Taiwan. It has also halted all imports of Taiwanese citrus fruits, cold hairtail, and frozen mackerel.
- The sanction-based diplomatic coercion from China is causing serious concerns of economic security from not only Taiwan but also other neighboring countries. If the Taiwanese and Korean problems escalate simultaneously, it is highly likely that the new Cold War structure by trilateral North Korea-China-Russia alliance, led by China, will become permanent.

4

Promoting the Denuclearization of North Korea

KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

A. Denuclearization in North Korea and Developing a Peace Regime

- When it comes to North Korea issues, the gap between principles and reality has been increasingly widening. Through the enactment of the Nuclear Policy Law in September 2022, North Korea essentially declared a veto on denuclearization and the irreversibility of its pursuit of nuclear weapons development. In other words, North Korea took steps to fundamentally shut off any discussions over and demands for denuclearization. Hence, while it would still be important to maintain the denuclearization principle, a more realistic approach toward North Korea's nuclear issue seems necessary: flexible entry and processes are required to allow for higher acceptability from the North Korean side.
- Priority should be set on delaying and, at least initially, freezing North Korea's nuclear advancement. While maintaining denuclearization as the ultimate goal, offers to induce talks should include a "guarantee of safety" as a measure to reduce mutual threat. If the entry deal includes denuclearization as a means of achieving "mutual safety," North Korea may find the offer more acceptable. This requires long-term and stepwise approaches through arms control or disarmament processes. At the denuclearization stage, we may flesh out the arms control and disarmament approach and nuclear agreement.
- It is also important to understand the strategic intentions behind North Korea's principles of "responding to power with power and goodwill with goodwill" and proportional

response. Such strategies disguise their true aims, first by educating and reminding the U.S. to accept their demands and negotiation principles, and second by controlling the political circumstances and buying time to achieve irreversible advancement of nuclear weapons which will clearly allow for a better positioning at the negotiation table.

- To counter such strategies, we must clearly declare reciprocity as our preemptive negotiation principle. Previous attitude from South Korea was in the form of requesting talks and cooperation, an approach that focuses on presenting offers to North Korea. As a result, South Korea failed to drive home its response principles against non-cooperation and betrayal to North Korea. Hence, it is important to preemptively lay out principles by educating North Korea on cooperation through a “Korean tit-for-tat strategy” – responding with cooperation for cooperation and determination against hostility – and through presenting reciprocity as the only principle that will bring forth rewards.

B. Reinforcing International Cooperation

1) Cooperation with the U.S. for the Denuclearization of North Korea

- For a successful South Korea-U.S. cooperation on the denuclearization of North Korea, the two parties need to present a joint roadmap toward denuclearization. South Korea should actively crystalize the denuclearization roadmap and coordinate with the U.S. to present a joint response system.²⁾

Furthermore, South Korea should present the various safety guarantees included in the Yoon Administration's Audacious Initiative as joint corresponding rewards, increasing reliability of the offer.

- Solutions for North Korea's issues should be linked with the Indo-Pacific Strategies of the U.S., elevating the South Korea-U.S. alliance to the center of the mechanism behind maintaining order and ensuring the security in East Asia. Comprehensively developing the South Korea-U.S. alliance means expanding the domain of cooperation to the fields of economy, advanced technology, environment, and healthcare. Accordingly, South Korea needs to proactively broaden the perception of the alliance going beyond a limited role and function as a security alliance and preemptively set the agendas on the East Asian order and the relevant security issues.

2) Cooperation with China for the Denuclearization of North Korea

- With the strengthening of Xi Jinping's modernized Chinese socialist ideology, the socialist bondage between China and North Korea will strengthen while their distance with the democratic value of South Korea, U.S., and Japan will further increase. However, in developing the Peace Regime in the Korean Peninsula, China is in support of the declaration of the

²⁾ TaeEun Min, Taeyeon Hwang, and Seungsoo Hyun, "Cooperation with the US, China, and Russia for Denuclearization of North Korea," KINU Online Series CO22-13, May 13, 2022, p. 4. < <https://www.kinu.or.kr/pyxis-api/1/digital-files/894b9e49-f117-4f29-85c6-7d9652b85f50> > (Accessed: August 25, 2022).

end of war. Also, China has the power and willingness to persuade North Korea to stop their nuclear provocations. Hence, South Korea needs to try to induce Chinese support and cooperation in nuclear deterrence against North Korea, supporting the normalization of U.S.-North Korea relations, and pursuing the declaration of the end of war. South Korea ought to induce China to help North Korea normalize its relations with the U.S. and support its reform and opening through Sino-North Korea summits and high-level communication channels.

- The Audacious Initiative is composed of three steps: 1) initial actions and comprehensive agreements (South Korea's food assistance in exchange for North Korea's natural resources; and South Korea's medical support for North Korea), 2) substantive denuclearization, and 3) complete denuclearization (full scale investment and trade, normalization of U.S.-North Korea relations, signing of a peace agreement, and the full implementation of arms control). During the initial stage, we can test out healthcare and medical support pilot projects in the Sino-North Korean border area based on the cooperation among South and North Korea and China. At the substantive and complete denuclearization stages, South Korea can vitalize investments and trade with North Korea through the cooperation between South Korea and China.

3) Cooperation with Russia for the Denuclearization of North Korea

- Russia sees the geopolitical challenges stemming from the U.S. as a greater threat than those stemming from North Korean nuclear weapons. There might be various hurdles to cooperating with Russia on North Korea's nuclear weapons issue because Russia views North Korea as a valuable strategic asset holding the U.S. in check in the Northeast Asian region, and because it is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, being able to exercise a veto power.³⁾
- Despite the difficult circumstances, it is important for South Korea not to exclude Russia when discussing North Korea's nuclear issues. Russia has consistently argued for a multilateral solution to the North Korean nuclear issue, and promoting a peaceful denuclearization process is extremely difficult without Russia's consent. In this sense, Russia is an important partner. South Korea needs to develop the logic required to persuade Russia about the South Korean government's strong willingness to denuclearize and peacefully solve the North Korean nuclear issue.⁴⁾
- South Korea should especially focus on public diplomacy toward Russia. While there are only few Russian researchers and agenda-setting experts on the issues surrounding the Korean Peninsula, the recent deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations has exacerbated their generally rigid anti-American sentiment and sympathetic sentiments toward North Korea. South Korea needs to find ways to develop public diplomacy

³⁾ Ibid, p. 7.

⁴⁾ Ibid, p. 7.

measures and expertise on Russia in order to maintain and increase the pro-South Korean public opinion in Russia and prevent the spread of pro-North Korea & anti-South Korea sentiment among the small pool of Russian experts on the Korean Peninsula.

C. Developing Channels for Security Discussions among South Korea, North Korea, and the U.S.

- Traditional approaches to denuclearization relied heavily on bilateral negotiations between North Korea and the U.S. Bilateral negotiations between the two countries have proved difficult to settle due to the different approaches taken by the two parties, and failures to settle have led to a vicious cycle of escalating North Korea's anti-South Korea offensives and tensions between the two Koreas. If South Korea continues to rely on the two parties for resolving critical issues such as denuclearization and establishing a peace regime, the ROK will only be able to react after the fact, and denuclearization may turn out to be difficult to achieve.
- To realize a predictable denuclearization roadmap and the reciprocity principle, as emphasized by the Yoon administration, a comprehensive trilateral negotiation and agreement structure among South Korea, North Korea, and the U.S. is needed. Bilateral issues are interconnected among the three parties, so the U.S. and North Korea cannot easily come to an agreement bilaterally. It may only turn inter-Korean issues into secondary issues or as means of achieving other ends. The parties need to consider primarily

coming to a comprehensive trilateral agreement on denuclearization, followed by three different bilateral agreements (DRPK-U.S., South Korea-North Korea, and South Korea-U.S.) on detailed points that ultimately the international community guarantees.

- Also, with the U.S.-China strategic competition and the New Cold War-style confrontation in Northeast Asia, there's an ever-higher chance that regional issues, once broke out, may escalate into greater crises. The region is inundated with issues that have the potential to escalate into military conflicts such as those surrounding Taiwan, the South China Sea, North Korean nuclear weapons, and the military standoff in the Korean Peninsula. Hence, we need a permanent channel to prevent the South Korea-U.S. extended deterrence and North Korean nuclear and missile activities from escalating into misunderstandings and conflicts as well as to discuss other security issues.

5

Normalization of Inter-Korean Relations and Establishing the Foundations for Unification



KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

A. Normalization of Inter-Korean Relations

- To establish sustainable North Korea policies and normalize inter-Korean relations, South Korea needs to present a clear strategic direction. In other words, South Korea needs to transition from the paradigm of “strategic ambiguity” to that of “strategic clarity.”⁵⁾ “Strategic ambiguity” approximates a “Korean version of strategic patience” policies. Inter-Korean relations based on unbalanced levels of interaction and security, inaction against North Korean misbehaviors, and a lack of practical policies for the North Korean public are all results of the “strategic ambiguity” approach.
- The most important task is to resolve the unbalance between interaction and security. A functionalist approach pertaining to the idea that interaction and cooperation will drive peace in the Korean Peninsula has already presented its limits. North Korea's nuclear issue is complex, and complete denuclearization requires over 10 years of time frame. In other words, both the “interaction first, security second” and “security first, interaction second” approaches have their limits. Hence, a realistic alternative is to simultaneously establish a denuclearized peace regime in the Korean Peninsula and advance inter-Korean relations.
- For sustainable inter-Korean relations, it is important to help North Korea abide by inter-Korean agreements and engage in international commerce in compliance with international

⁵⁾ Han-Bum Cho, “A Contemplation on North Korea Policy and Normalization of Inter-Korean Relations,” KINU Online Series CO22-15, May 19, 2022, p. 7. <<https://www.kinu.or.kr/pyxis-api/1/digital-files/e5550c14-730d-4594-8d20-6a068f28c088>> (Accessed: September 26, 2022).

norms.⁶⁾ If North Korea repeatedly breaks agreements and violates norms depending on their needs and judgments, trust cannot be established and inter-Korean relations cannot stabilize. Realistically, however, there are limits to immediately implementing North Korea's "responsibility first, inter-Korean relations second" principle. We must consider realistic limitations, prevent North Korea's continued misbehaviors, and ultimately hold it responsible for its past wrongdoings.

B. Strategies for Pursuing Inter-Korean Green Détente

- In normalizing inter-Korean relations and establishing the foundations for unification, environmental issues that are closely connected to the lives of the North Korean public such as climate change and ecosystems can be a good entry point. The Inter-Korean Green Détente is grounded on a functionalist approach to enlarging the range of cooperation based on the fields of climate change, environment, and ecosystems. Ultimately, its initial aim is to establish a green community in the Korean Peninsula. In the process, it is important to establish the foundations for unification by guaranteeing better livelihoods and safety for the North Korean public.
- Core tasks for the Green Détente include: 1) cooperation on climate change and environmental issues, 2) cooperation on forestry, drinking water and hygiene, and natural disasters, 3)

⁶⁾ Ibid, p. 6.

cooperation on agriculture, 4) cooperation on water quality management and water resources, and 5) implementation of the Inter-Korean Joint Economic Development Plan. Since the Yoon Administration’s Audacious Initiative pursues inter-Korean interaction and cooperation in conjunction with North Korea’s denuclearization, implementation strategies and plans to carry out the core tasks for the Green Détente should also be systematically developed in step with the denuclearization process.

Figure V-1 Strategies for Pursuing the Inter-Korean Green Détente and Core Tasks



Source: Written by the Author

C. Establishing the Foundations for Unification

- The necessity of unification as a rationale for unification has lost grounds especially amongst the MZ generation. As unification policies based on the rationale of necessity increasingly failed to earn public support, the Yoon administration suggested garnering an extended consensus on unification through inclusive, cross-generational, cross-regional, and cross-ideological participation and communication. The administration especially declared the expansion of “social dialogues” as a central means to such participation and communication.
- To efficiently execute dialogues of varying agendas and levels in a short time span, we need to construct a social committee that will help inherit the Korean National Community Unification Formula. The committee should be composed of groups responsible for 1) the cooperation between government appointed experts and the private sector, 2) managing cross-generational and cross-regional social dialogues and hearings, and 3) interparty bipartisan cooperation.
- Also, to improve the next generation’s perceptions of unification, the overall unification education policy requires a broad rethinking. Especially, the governance structure behind school-based unification education policies requires modification. School-based unification education requires an organic coordination between the policymaking institutions and the policy enforcement institutions. The government should consider proposing long-term directions and policies

on unification education by forming an expert or special committee on unification education under the National Education Committee, bringing together unification education-related institutions like the Ministry of Unification or the Office of Education and experts from related fields.

6

Resolving Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues

KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

A. Humanitarian Aid

- The Minister of Unification has mentioned the government's decision to initiate inter-Korean interaction starting in 2023, the second year of the administration, to substantively carry out its unification and North Korea policies. As an entrance strategy for inter-Korean interactions, the South Korean government needs to continuously present specified plans for providing humanitarian aid to North Korea, using it as a trigger for facilitating inter-Korean dialogues.
- To find a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations, South Korea should continue to operate the Health and Medical Cooperation Platform on the Korean Peninsula Initiative, founded in 2021 and led by the Ministry of Unification. The platform is a consultative group composed of governments, international organizations, private entities, and academics sharing information and strategies for healthcare cooperation targeted at North Korea.
- Also, there needs to be a sustained and expanded effort to monitor and analyze the conditions of the vulnerable in North Korean including women, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. The rights of women and people with disabilities are topics that North Korea continues to cooperate on with the international community to improve its image. In inter-Korean relations, issue-specific approaches on the vulnerable population can lead to cooperation both at the public-private and international levels. Also, South Korea should strengthen its approaches to humanitarian issues like separated families and children's' rights in North Korea by

cooperating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Seoul.

B. Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues Including Separated Families

- For members of separated families, the policy that requires the most urgent implementation is the one that identifies whether their family members are alive. To resolve the issue of separated families, we need to go a step further by initiating letter exchanges and regular face-to-face reunions and expanding the scope of the meeting participants. Unfortunately, face-to-face reunions are currently unfeasible due to North Korea's COVID-19 restrictions. Accounting for current circumstance, South Korea should first promote letter exchanges and non-face-to-face reunions – i.e., video reunions – and gradually increase the types for, and scope of, these interactions once the pandemic loosens its grip.
- To allow for exchanges among separated families including a full-scale survival identification, South Korea must induce North Korea's cooperation through direct bilateral dialogues and via the support of the international community. To do so, the ROK must strengthen its diplomatic efforts toward individual diplomatic counterparts on the separated family issue. In other words, Seoul must continue to resolve issues of abductees, prisoners-of-wars, and detainees – people defined as belonging to a category of special separated families. Abductions have occurred not only in South Korea but also in other countries, so solutions to the issue should also derive

from active international cooperation.

- Alongside finding solutions to the issue facing separated families, South Korea is also at a point where it needs mid-to-long-term policy solutions in preparation for the passing of the first-generation separated families. To preserve the history and documentations of separated families, South Korea needs to develop a systematic memorial project for separated families. Establishing such a project first requires the passing of related legislations. Moreover, South Korea should also consider legally establishing a Separated Families Day to help the public commemorate the issue of separate families and to hold related events.

C. Improving North Korea's Human Rights

- Until now, establishing a peaceful inter-Korean relations took priority over North Korean human rights issues, resulting in national and international criticisms of passivity and a lack of policy consistency. Considering the criticisms, the Yoon administration has strongly delivered its willingness to take initiative in improving North Korean human rights conditions by upholding universal values like freedom and human rights through international solidarity. However, while the Yoon administration should firmly hold on to its principles, bringing substantive improvements to North Korean human rights would also require flexibility in the process of policy execution.
- South Korea should, as a 'global pivotal state,' reestablish its North Korean human rights policy structure so that the ROK

can substantively take initiative in a global effort to improve North Korean human rights conditions. To comprehensively control and efficiently execute North Korean human rights policies, the administration should establish a “Council on North Korean Human Rights Policy (tentatively named)” that brings together the Ministries of Unification and Foreign Affairs, among others.

- In the field of human rights, there is a recent trend of expanding roles played by not only international organizations like the UN but also human rights NGOs. The process of establishing international solidarity should also include distributing adequate roles to human rights NGOs. Above all, it is essential to find how governments, North Korean Human Rights Foundation, national research institutes, the UN, and private entities can effectively cooperate in conducting and utilizing studies on the current conditions of North Korean human rights, a core foundation for activities on improving North Korean human rights.

7

Conclusion

KINU

KOREA INSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL UNIFICATION

- This paper explored the directions for pursuing the Yoon administration's unification and North Korea policies. The Audacious Initiative is a comprehensive initiative integrating the goals of North Korean denuclearization and development. Constructively building on previous unification and North Korea policies, the Audacious Initiative reflects the administration's willingness to pragmatically and fairly pursue national interest on the basis of South Korean values and identities.
- As the Yoon administration enters its second year of incumbency in 2023, its unification and North Korea policies are expected to begin materializing. In his end-of-the-year press conference, the Minister of Unification Young-se Kwon mentioned that the following year will be a year that gains the momentum to materialize the Audacious Initiative.⁷⁾ While the strategic and unification environment is not likely to transform rapidly, the future of the Korean Peninsula will approach the peaceful unification environment desired by all people in the South and the North if the sustainability and efficiency of the administration's unification and North Korea policies remain guaranteed.
- In the end, the willingness of the government and a unified public opinion are the core features required of continuously

⁷⁾ The following has been mentioned as the directions of implementation in 2023:

1) deter North Korean offensives and begin moves for inter-Korean interaction, 2) strengthen inter-departmental cooperation for the execution of the Audacious Initiative, and 3) fully initiate settlement policies for North Korean refugees. "Young-se Kwon says, "we will make inter-Korean interactions happen starting next year ... we will persuade North Korea to stop offensives," *Yonhap News*, December 13, 2022, <<https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20221213148900504?input=1195m>> (Accessed: December 13, 2022).

driving and advancing the national tasks of the denuclearization of North Korea, normalization of inter-Korean relations, and humanitarian cooperation. Hence, from a mid-to-long-term perspective, a consistent emphasis should be given to the following unification and North Korea policy principle: establishing the foundations of a peaceful unification.

Unification and North Korea Policy of the Yoon Suk Yeol Administration: Implementing Government Tasks

