

The Background to North Korea's Outdated Aggressive Propaganda toward South Korea: Focusing on the Document "Truth Indictment Bill by the Secretariat of the Committee on the Peaceful Unification of the Nation"

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Through the Secretariat of the Committee on the Peaceful Unification of the Nation last December, North Korea released the "Truth Indictment Bill," which places the blame for the disintegration of inter-Korean relations solely on South Korea. At the end of last year, North Korea released its "Statement from the National Defense Commission (NDC)" (December 30), which sharply criticized South Korea's restrictions on expressing condolences for the death of Kim Jong-il. On February 2 of this year, North Korea sent an open inquiry through the NDC in regards to the "high treason committed against North Korea during the event of its people's great national mourning." The latest indictment bill that was released is an extension of these previous documents and is not markedly different, with the exception of a few accusations attached to the bill and the fact that the institution that delivered the announcement had been changed to the Secretariat of the Committee on the Peaceful Unification of the Nation. This paper will compare the contents of this indictment bill with the facts and examine the background and the cause of North Korea's preoccupation with its one-sided "correspondence politics," which is apparently ineffective both in terms of agitation and propaganda toward South Korea and provides an excuse to the international community.

The Contentions Stated in the Truth Indictment Bill

The indictment bill states four of the following contentions. First, the South Korean government "engaged in the malicious provocations

against efforts to improve North-South relations by denying the June 15 Declaration and other actions”; second, South Korea incited “provocative and atrocious conflicts between the administrations”; third, South Korea planned “extremely dangerous military provocations”; and fourth, South Korea engaged in “egregious provocations against its supreme dignity.” A close examination of these contentions is as follow.

[1] “Malicious Provocations against Efforts to Improve Inter-Korean Relations by Denying the June 15 Declaration and Other Actions”

The main point of North Korea’s contention is that the “current South Korean government has denied the June 15 and October 4 Declarations, insulted the ideology our national autonomy in dealing with the inter-Korean relations, and ceased all North-South dialogues under the pretext of the Denuclearization-first Policy.” But this is different from the truth. On many occasions, the South Korean government has clearly expressed its respect for all agreements between North and South Korea, including the June 15 and October 4 Declarations,¹⁾ and on every occasion, it has proposed holding joint North-South meetings to detail the measures in implementing the June 15 and October 4 Declarations. In fact, it was North Korea that had engaged in acts that violated the June 15 and October 4 Declarations. In March 2008, North Korea closed the Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Conference Office and unilaterally announced the suspension of dialogue between North and South Korea by committing acts of armed provocation toward South Korea, such as sinking the Cheonan vessel, launching long-range missiles and conducting nuclear weapons tests. In addition, North Korea engaged in irrational acts of slander and defamation directed at specific individuals, including the President, prominent individuals from various fields and media outlets, as well as made threats of armed aggression. Hence, violations of the June 15 and October 4 Declarations were committed by North Korea instead of South Korea. If North Korea “genuinely” wishes implement these declarations, then it must immediately stop all provocations and engage in dialogue.

In respect to these circumstances, the indictment bill attacks the statements from the President and Minister of Unification. According to the bill, President Lee Myung-bak “insulted our people’s ideology as narrow-minded and a form of exclusive ethnocentrism, which is incapable of improving North-South relations during a celebratory speech on March 1, 2008.” It continued to insist that the Minister of Unification had “publicly stated that inter-Korean relations will continue to face hard times if the North Korean nuclear problem is not resolved and officially declared a policy of confrontation, while the

1) “We have the intention of holding serious discussions with North Korea in regards to the means of implementing the agreements made between North and South Korea, including the July 4 Joint Statement, the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement, the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization, the June 15 Joint Declaration and the October 4 Summit Declaration” (July 11, 2008, the President’s opening speech to the National Assembly); “The government has always made clear its respect for all agreements made between North and South Korea, including the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the June 15 Joint Declaration, for the purpose of promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula and improving inter-Korean relations based on mutual respect” (June 14, 2009, commentary by the spokesperson from the Ministry of Unification on the ninth anniversary of the June 15 Declaration).

implementation of the Declarations and North-South dialogue have effectively ceased.” These reports distort their true intentions. The President stated that “we must avoid narrow-minded ethnocentrism, and instead strive for cultural openness that interacts and co-exists with the international community and communicates with the world, since the problems between North and South Korea cannot be resolved through ethnocentrism. This is not only an internal problem, but it is also concurrently an international problem.” It is a statement that intended to express the difficulty in creating any kind of development by limiting oneself within the boundaries of ethnicity and nation-state in the global age where people, goods, information and resources move beyond national and ethnic boundaries. However, the people’s ideology in North Korea is not mentioned in the speech. In addition, North Korea was responsible for announcing the conflict in policy and ceasing dialogues by refusing all talks and contact between North and South Korean authorities in March 2008 and closing the Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Conference Office in Kaesong. The Minister of Unification’s statement, “The potential expansion of the Kaesong Industrial Complex is at the will of the North Korea. If the North Korean nuclear problem remains unresolved and uncertain, then the expansion of the Kaesong Industrial Complex would be difficult, and the progress of the project would be in question should the three essential conditions for South Korean business activities not be guaranteed, primarily in transit, communications and customs,” was taken out of context and its implication was distorted by the North Koreans authorities.

North Korea laid the blame on South Korea for the suspension of tourism in the Gungang Mountains. It argued that “South Korea has unilaterally ruined the Gungang Mountain tourism business with the excuse of the tourist incident,” and that “South Korea has claimed that it cannot acknowledge an agreement made with a private company that guaranteed the highest level of personal security for South Korean tourists during the Hyundai Group Chairman’s visit to Pyongyang.” However, North Koreans are clearly responsible for the suspension of tourism in the Gungang Mountains. If a civilian tourist is killed by a North Korean soldier, then it is absolutely within the South Korean government’s legitimate right to ban permits for tourism in such a dangerous location. Protecting the lives and safety of the people is the basic duty of the government. Only a clear and “official” guarantee of personal safety can lead to the resumption of tourism, but North Korea denied the requests of the South Korean government to investigate the incident and guarantee the safety of tourists. The “guarantee of the highest level of personal security” is not a promise made to a civilian company, but must be made between the responsible government administrations through agreements and pledges. No responsible state in the international community will allow their citizens to enter regions where dangers are constantly present with only a simple promise from private entities.

North Korea also made brazen claims that lay the blame on South Korea for the sinking of the Cheonan vessel and the Yeonpyeong Island attacks. According to the indictment bill, “South Korea fabricated the Cheonan incident and pushed the political situation to the extreme, completely shut down inter-Korean relations with the May 24 Measures,” “and provoked North Korea with the Yeonpyeong Island attacks just prior to opening the North-South Korean Red Cross meetings, resulting in a failed dialogue.” The Cheonan incident was verified to be North Korea’s through the international community’s scientific and objective investigation and inspection. The joint international investigation team involved 24 experts

from four nations, which included the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden, as well as civilian experts from South Korea as a means to establish its credibility. North Korea is quibbling that the Yeonpyeong Island attacks were self-defensive measures in response to the South Korean military's artillery training, but at the time, the South Korean military was training in an area south of the Northern Limit Line. Despite these facts, North Korea launched attacks in civilian areas, which resulted in the deaths of two civilians, and this is clearly a serious act of provocation that cannot be justified through either humanitarian terms or international law. North Korea's act of shifting the blame onto South Korea can only be interpreted as an intention to cease all North-South interactions.

The indictment bill claims that "in early 2011, North Korea proposed dialogue negotiations through the joint statements of the government, Party and organizations, but South Korea unduly criticized these efforts as 'attacks under the guise of peace' and a 'unification front strategy'," which ruined the opportunity for North-South dialogue. Nevertheless, the truth is that while the South Korean government has consistently maintained its position to resolve current inter-Korean problems through dialogue, North Korea refused to engage in dialogue since the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration, continued to provoke South Korea, and did not convey any sincerity toward engaging in North-South Korean dialogue. If North Korea had genuinely aspired to resume dialogues, then expressing its apologies for the sinking of the Cheonan vessel and the Yeonpyeong Island attacks in addition to making a public pledge to refrain from further recurrences would have been appropriate in terms of both morals and conventions, rather than making proposals for dialogue with solely political purposes. North Korea's duplicity and unpredictability is well-known. In the beginning of 2011, North Korea proposed North-South dialogues through joint statements issued by the government party and various organizations, but in late December 2011, it abruptly announced that "we will never associate with the treasonous group of Lee o0." Furthermore, during military-level talks that had required great pains to arrange in February 2011, North Korea repeatedly made unreasonable claims and unilaterally withdrew from the talks. If North Korea truly desires peace on the Korean Peninsula and progress in inter-Korean relations, then it must engage in dialogue between the authorities of both countries with a sincere attitude, instead of avoiding talks while shifting the blame onto South Korea for the indefinite suspension of dialogue.

Furthermore, North Korea made the ridiculous claim that "in broad daylight in February last year, South Korea kidnapped dozens of North Korean citizens who have been drifting in the western seas" and "detained them for almost a month, while obsessing over plans for defection, and still has not returned some of these kidnapped North Koreans." The South Korean government respected the wishes of the four North Korean who have not returned. North Korea is arguing that this decision is against humanitarianism, but the truth is that sending these four North Korean citizens, who have expressed wishes to defect into the South, back would be an act that violate humanitarian principles, as well as an illicit act that violates the duties of international law.

[2] “Provoked Atrocious Conflicts between the Government Administrations”

North Korea’s second contention is that the South Korean government is provoking conflicts between the governments. It accused South Korea of provoking conflict between the two Koreas and aiming to change North Korea’s regime and unify it with South Korea through absorption by “crushing the North-South agreement that had focused on accepting and respecting the ideologies and institutions of the other state, never hesitating to make insulting comments that challenge North Korea’s regime,” and “claiming that its purpose is to unify the two Koreas within a liberal democratic regime on the one hand, but openly proclaim regime conflict to the world on the other hand” during the South Korea-U.S. summit meeting in November 2008. Not only has the South Korean government consistently maintained the position that it does not wish for the disintegration of the North Korean regime or unification through absorption, but the President has also repeatedly expressed these intentions as well.²⁾ It is a well-known fact that the South Korean government is pursuing a gradual and peaceful path toward unification based on a foundation of peace and stability on the Peninsula through North-South interaction and cooperation, as its plans for unification on behalf of the Korean community. Distorting these facts and insisting that the South Korean government strives for drastic changes in North Korea or even for its disintegration is complete nonsense. In fact, it was North Korea that interfered with South Korea’s internal affairs and tried to influence its election process, the foundation of South Korea’s democratic institution.

On these issues, the indictment bill also argued that the South Korean government “announced the extremely harmful Denuclearization, Openness, 3000 as its North Korean policy,” and “in 2009, it mobilized the Ministry of Unification, intelligence agency and other puppet strategy institutions in order to manipulate the extremely provocative emergency government restoration plan that presumed a scenario of abrupt change.” However, the purpose of the Denuclearization, Openness, 3000 is not to incite conflict between the governments, but propose a solution to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue that had continually deteriorated because of North Korea’s actions. It is a well-established fact that the South Korean government and the international community have plans to rebuild North Korea’s economy according to the developing nuclear situation. North Korea has mentioned the “emergency government plan” after seeing South Korea’s media reports. Nevertheless, raising tensions through intimidation from media reports rather than government authorities’ statements will not alleviate North-South relations.

North Korea also scathingly attacked the proposal for unification taxes. North Korea claimed that South Korea displayed its commitment to unification through absorption by means of conflict between the two administrations, stating that “this unification tax was first mentioned during the so-called celebratory

2) The following are some key quotes on these issues made by President Lee Myung-bak. “We do not presume that North Korea will suddenly disintegrate in a short period of time” (April 17, 2008, Washington Post press meeting; “We do not believe that North Korea is in an extreme situation or on the verge of collapse. We must be prepared for the worst case scenarios, but we do not believe that North Korea is on the brink of disintegration” (January, 28, 2010, BBC interview); “We do not think that North Korea will one day collapse and unification will be achieved. I had proposed the unification tax so that we can first establish peaceful relations with North Korea, and in the next step, mutually contribute to the efforts and prepare for peaceful unification in ordinary times” (September 10, 2010, national Russian TV interview).

remarks on August 15, 2010, and in June of last year, South Korea revealed its evil intentions for conflict between the governments with total nonsense that unification can suddenly appear like a thief in the night.” However, South Korea pursued gradual and peaceful unification under the basis of peace and stability on the Peninsula through inter-Korean interaction and cooperation. During this process, it is most important to focus on the will and capabilities of the Korean people and steadily prepare ourselves for unification. In other words, the discussions on preparation for unification, such as the unification tax, does not promote conflict between the countries, but are carried out for the future of the Korean Peninsula and our people. North Korea is distorting South Korea’s true intentions, which is to emphasize the necessity for real preparations for unification through the procurement of funds, into a scheme for inciting conflict between the two nations.

North Korea also blames South Korea for its involvement in North Korean human rights. It argues that South Korea had “actively manipulated the North Korean human rights resolutions with the United States and its followers at the United Nations General Assembly,” and “slandered and insulted our dignity and government by incorporating the United States and Japan in a puppet show called the North Korean Free Week.” However, this situation in regards to the violation of human rights in North Korea, such as the forced labor camps, is a verified fact. Human rights are the universal rights of mankind and protected as the basic right to all people around the world. As the voices of concern from the international community on the human rights situation in North Korea have grown louder, the problem has been addressed at the United Nations with international civic organizations taking part in the issue. These distortions of facts and protests from North Korea prove how little value it attributes to human rights, and the right path for North Korea is to make the appropriate efforts to relieve the anxieties of the international community rather than slandering South Korea.

North Korea claimed that South Korea “tried to resume psychological manipulation of anti-North Korean broadcasts in the Military Demarcation Line and continued to provoke us by mobilizing human garbage to disseminate propaganda bills.” However, the South Korean government is not broadcasting any anti-North Korean messages near the Military Demarcation Line, and it is certainly not pursuing the “rapidly changing circumstances” or “subversion of the regime” that North Korea claims. It is actually the North Korean authorities that are engaging in the shameless abuse against the South Korean head of state and government, and they must immediately stop. North Korea’s indiscriminate defamation of against South Korea and propaganda designed to incite conflict within South Korea has caused provoked responses from South Korean civic groups. In contrast to North Korea, South Korea is maintaining a democratic government. As long as these civic groups are acting within the realms of the law, there are no legal grounds to restrict their activities. It was North Korea that had attempted to intervene in South Korean politics through malicious slander and propaganda directed at the South Korean government, specific parties and media corporations.

[3] “Extremely Dangerous Military Provocations”

The third contention is that South Korea is engaged in acts of military provocations. According to the

indictment bill, South Korea is “engaged in war exercises to invade North Korea with the United States under the guises of the Eulji Freedom Guardian, Key Resolve, Eagle, Ho Guk, and others,” and “involved in a military treaty with Japan and the creation of a tripartite military alliance” in order to “increase the possibility of war on the Korean Peninsula and draw Japan’s Self Defense Force (JSDF) into this dangerous game of playing with fire.” The Key Resolve, Eagle and other joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises are annual defensive drills. In addition, a plan of the drill is notified to North Korea prior to the commencement of these exercises. In order to verify whether the exercises violate the armistice agreement, representatives from the United Nations and the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission are allowed to inspect the procedures. In fact, it is North Korea that is responsible for raising the military tensions on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea is has publicly claimed that it possesses nuclear weapons, repeatedly launched missiles engaged in armed military provocations on two separate occasions (the sinking of the Cheonan vessel and the attacks on Yeonpyeong Island in 2010), and had even made terrorist threat against the South Korean media. Recently, North Korea raised military tensions in not only the Korean Peninsula but also throughout Northeast Asia by announcing the need for “civilians to take shelter,” all in response to regular military exercises conducted in South Korean territory in the five islands of the West Sea.³⁾ This is an incredibly brazen claim to make against South Korea.

[4] “Egregious Provocations against the Supreme Dignity”

Finally, North Korea claimed that South Korea the supreme leadership in North Korea. According to North Korean assertions, South Korea “committed an egregious act of provocation by targeting our top leaders with a hail of bullets at the reserve army training center in Incheon and Yangju of Gyunggi Province in May of last year.” “In June of last year, it repeatedly committed extremely malicious provocative acts, such as displaying mottos and banners insulting our supreme leadership at units stationed in the front lines and the surrounding areas,” and “in February this year, South Korea engaged in the heinous act of hanging portraits of the greatest figures from the Baekdu Mountains to the internal affairs office of the puppet army next to banners of unspeakable words.” In reality, North Korea violated the spirit of mutual respect for the head of state. The South Korean government neither mentioned the name of the North Korean Supreme Leader nor insulted or slandered this individual. Despite these facts, North Korea is repeatedly abusing and slandering South Korea’s head of state with allegedly unthinkable words.

The North Korean indictment bill even takes offence to the South Korean government’s restrictions on expressing condolences during the funeral of Kim Jong-il. It was an act of “egregious provocation a crime against the people and humanity following the great state funeral of the Korean people.” North Korea claims that as “the major news outlets announced the great state funeral, South Korea the emergency National Security Council and the Cabinet, while also placing the army, navy and air force units on high

3) North Korea had threatened South Korea with the statement that “all civilians living or making a living in or around the five islands of the West Sea must seek shelter in safe locations at 9 o’clock on the 20th when the warmongering puppet military will commence its provocative shootings from the sea” (February 19, 2012, open letter of notification from the North Korean headquarters of the Western Zone of the front lines).

alert and a state of emergency.” Even when faced with difficulties, such as the sinking of the Cheonan naval vessel and the shelling on Yeonpyeong Island, the South Korean government made the utmost efforts to improve inter-Korean relations when Kim Jong-il passed away last December. It sent words of condolences to the people of North Korea, allowed civilian delegations to visit North Korea to pay their respects, and also allowed civic groups to broadcast messages of condolences to the North. South Korea did not provoke North Korea or create intentional chaos. Nonetheless, North Korea’s offense at these issues on condolences, in spite of blatant facts, cannot be seen as appropriate behavior in terms of traditional Korean funeral customs, and it is just as equally unreasonable of North Korea to dispute the emergency measures initiated by South Korea in preparation for any accidental situations.

North Korea claimed that South Korea maliciously reproached “the supreme dignity of North Korea, spewing gibberish about events for display or political shows during the celebration of the 66th anniversary of the establishment of the Boy Scouts.” Meanwhile, the South Korean government did not mention anything about “events for display” or “political shows” during the commemoration of the establishment of the Boy Scouts in North Korea. It is confusing some media reports as statements from the South Korean government. In contrast to the dictatorial North Korean regime, South Korea assures the freedom of the press, so it is impossible for the South Korean government to control and manipulate the media, which would be a violation of the constitutional spirit. It is North Korea that has been violating the freedom of South Korean press and raising tensions by threatening to attack South Korean media outlets and publicizing their coordinates.

North Korea also blamed South Korea for the Roh Soo Hee incident. It claimed that “South Korea had taken the Roh Soo Hee, Deputy President of the South Korean headquarters of the Pan-Korean Alliance for Unification, to jail the moment he stepped over the Panmunjom...and behaved like thugs slandering our supreme dignity.” Roh Soo Hee had clearly violated South Korean laws, did not enter North Korea legitimate procedures, and is currently under legal investigation. These are appropriate procedures in accordance to South Korean law, and the North Korean statement is an act of interference into South Korean affairs.

Analyzing North Korea’s Intentions

North Korea is mobilizing not only propaganda media, such as the *Rodong Shinmun*, but also statement from official institutions, indictment bills and various other instruments to relentlessly abuse South Korean governmental organizations, officials and civic groups. As previously examined, these propaganda activities are based on the distortion of facts and one-sided arguments.

Then, what does North Korea to gain from these contentions? The simple answer might be that North Korea was trying to incite conflict within South Korea and intervene in the elections. However, if this was North Korea’s intention, then it most likely would have resulted in the opposite effect. With the exception of the small minority of pro-North Korean factions, it would be difficult to find South Korean citizens who agree with North Korea’s claims in regards to the sinking of the Cheonan vessel and attacks on the Yeonpyeong Island. It is also highly unlikely that North Korea’s other contentions would be convincing

enough to expand the number of supporters for North Korea's cause or refocus their priorities. The contentions are actually provoking South Korea with words that would cause the conservatives to rally. North Korea would be aware of this. We can also surmise that North Korea is verbally assaulting South Korea in order to make a strong case to the South Korean people and the international community that South Korea is solely responsible for the disintegration of inter-Korean relations. Since North Korea's verbal attacks are extremely provocative, they are one of the major causes for the disintegration of inter-Korean relations. Such an attitude is actually creating adverse effects on the South Korean people and international community's general perception of North Korea. It may be that North Korea is trying to create an atmosphere of fear within South Korean society or limit the activities of the South Korean government through verbal threats. However, this has also resulted in the South Korean government implementing an unwavering policy on North Korea as well as the strengthened U.S.-South Korean military alliance for the purpose of containing threats and provocations from North Korea. Other than these reasons, it would be difficult to find any logical or rational grounds for the slander and attacks.

Then, what is the background for North Korea's various institutions making these constant propaganda attacks that are either futile or have detrimental effects on North Korea's position? The cause for these constant irrational acts of provocation can only be understood by taking into consideration the transitional phase of the power succession and regime change in North Korea. In other words, North Korea's slanders and attacks can be seen as political acts for domestic consumption. The competitive libelous and verbal abuses instigated by a variety of North Korean political actors appear to have the following goals. First is the competition for loyalty. Following the regime change, each individual and institution needed to prove its loyalty to the new leadership in order to gain the upper hand during the process of redistributing power and resources, and "South Korea bashing" was the most readily available means to achieve that. North Korea's repeated verbal assaults against South Korea need to be understood in the context of a string of pledges of allegiances to Kim Jong-un. Their actions are targeted to those in power within North Korea, and therefore, the impact they make on South Korean society or the international community may be their main concern. In addition, the tug-of-war for loyalty among the actors has resulted in the increasing ferocity of the attacks leveled at South Korea. They are compelled to produce attacks that are stronger in impact in comparison to their rivals. Second, the North Korean leadership needs to present a common enemy in order to minimize the internal fractures that emerge during the period of regime change. The competition among followers for loyalty by attacking South Korea is not exactly a problem for the leadership. The incidents of North Korean military provocations during the past few years of preparation for the power succession prior to the death of Kim Jong-il can be understood within this context. Although the deterrence and defense of South and the U.S. strengthened and the dangers of military provocations had subsequently increased against the North, North Korea replaced direct, physical aggravations with propaganda and verbal attacks.

As analyzed previously, it appears that in the background of North Korea's verbal assaults against South Korea lies the need for the North Korean authoritarian regime to survive the period of transition. The ferocity of the attacks on South Korea will decrease only if the fundamental nature of the North Korean power structure changes, or if the transfer of power to the new regime surpasses the transition stage and

achieves stability. From the perspective of each actor within the North Korean regime, pointing out the current cooling of inter-Korean relations and advising the supreme leadership to restore relations would have been undoubtedly extremely dangerous, especially in times of transition. Without the determination of the North Korean supreme leadership or the intervention of a powerful international actor (such as China), then it is most likely that North Korea's aggressive behavior toward South Korea will persist in the near future through a force of habit. There is no other choice for the South Korean government, other than to be aware of North Korea's domestic affairs and make the utmost efforts to maintain deterrence and defensive preparedness in case of emergencies.