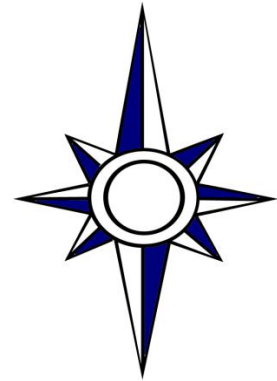


# Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



## South Korea-North Korea Relations: Plumbing the Depths

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Covering inter-Korean relations for *Comparative Connections* throughout the past decade has been a roller-coaster ride, given the peninsula's changeable political weather. Even so, the current state of affairs is unprecedented. Pyongyang has always been a master of threats and insults, but it has spent the whole of 2012 hurling ever ruder and angrier jibes at ROK President Lee Myung-bak; plumbing the depths even by North Korean standards. Just when one thought they could get no nastier, in April the official *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* published and trumpeted a set of vicious cartoons that depict Lee as a rat being gorily done to death, with captions (hardly needed) that one can only describe as exulting in vile and violent blood-lust. From the viewpoint of this journal, devoted as it is to bilateral relations, the problem is that the past four months essentially saw almost no interaction between the two Koreas except this one-sided name-calling. Unsurprisingly Seoul did have a few words to say in response, which only served to rile Pyongyang more. Still, as the classical German sociologist Georg Simmel wisely noted a century ago, conflict too is one form of sociation. (Those interested may read more at <http://www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/simmel12.html>)

Wading through filth is no fun, but duty must be done. In what follows we describe and try to interpret North Korea's campaign, which as the trimester ended showed ominous signs of escalating from words to deeds in attacks on South Korea's Global Position System (GPS) signals. In some obscure way, one intended function was probably to boost the callow Kim Jong Un, so we also briefly report his formal accession to the DPRK's top leadership posts.

### The North declares open season on Lee Myung-bak

Fortunately, and perhaps surprisingly, North Korea – not renowned for being helpful to those outside who wish to research it – has made it rather easy to track their anti-Lee Myung-bak campaign. First up, they make it plain that there is such a campaign – just in case there are still any *bien-pensant* liberals out there, of what K M Lawson has called the 'North Flank Guard' tendency ( <http://www.froginawell.net/korea/2010/12/the-north-flank-guard/> ), who accuse malicious hawks of wrongly imputing wickedness to the DPRK – which they view as either not that bad, or merely reacting with some justification to the prior attacks of others.

How do we know there is an anti-Lee campaign? Because KCNA has created a special file for it on its improved English-language website, <http://www.kcna.kp/goHome.do?lang=eng> which has been online for about a year now and features picture and video content as well as text. (Its former Japan-based text-only site at <http://www.kcna.co.jp/> continues as well, and is useful as an

archive – it goes back 15 years, to January 1997. To search this, however, you'll also need the witty and invaluable unofficial site <http://www.nk-news.net> .)

But, back to Lee Myung-bak. At this writing, the new KCNA homepage has for some weeks been flashing across its masthead these five slogans:

Let Us Cut Off Windpipes of the Lee Myung Bak-led Swarm of Rats!  
Let Us Wipe Out the Lee Myung Bak-led Swarm of Rats in This Land And Sky!  
Let Us Shower the Lee Myung Bak-led Swarm of Rats with the Fire of Retaliation!  
Let Us Blow Up the Bases Used To Hurt the Dignity of our Supreme Leadership!  
Let Us Launch a Nationwide Sacred War to Wipe Out the Rat-like Lee Myung Bak Group!

Clicking on any of these takes you to <http://www.kcna.kp/tukbo.jsp> , headed “Let Us Cut Off Windpipes of Rat-like Lee Myung Bak Group!” – just in case anyone didn't yet get the message. This page has three items. There is a video (which this writer cannot open for some reason) of angry Korean People's Army (KPA) soldiers waving rifles. Bottom right of that is a link labeled ‘Cartoon,’ of which more anon. And below left is a file of articles headed ‘Lee Myung Bak Group Under Fire,’ the latest of which is printed in full center-page. (Note: Sometimes these links come up randomly in Korean rather than English. If so, persevere.)

The ‘Lee Under Fire’ collection has plenty to say, for all that it's repetitious. Thus far there are 28 pages, each of which contains 15 articles, except the first which has 10. That makes 430 articles in total since the series began on Dec. 30, or an average of over three per day; a torrent which shows no sign of easing up. Here are the most recent 15 article titles (thankfully rodent-free) at this writing, just to give the flavor:

Organizations of Koreans in China, Russia Call for Wiping Out Lee Myung Bak Group  
*Rodong Sinmun* Calls for Eliminating Lee Myung Bak Group  
S. Korean NA Accused of Pulling up DPRK over Satellite Launch: *Rodong Sinmun*  
Lee Myung Bak Group Accused of Drumbeats of War against North  
Crazy Lee Myung Bak Accused of Implanting Hostility into Children's Minds  
S. Korean Unification Ministry's Slander against DPRK under Fire: *Minju Joson*  
Lee Myung Bak Group and Other Hostile Forces Accused of Smear Campaign over DPRK's Satellite Launch  
Overseas Koreans Censure Lee Group's Anti-DPRK Confrontation Hysteria  
Satire on Lee Myung Bak Screened on *DPRK TV*  
*Rodong Sinmun* Calls for Bringing Down S. Korean Conservative Regime  
Lee Myung Bak's Anti-DPRK Confrontation Policy Bound to Go Bust: *Rodong Sinmun*  
Lee Myung Bak Group Will Perish in Fire: *Minju Joson*  
Lee Myung Bak's Resignation Demanded by Chairman of Overseas Headquarters of Pomminryon  
Lee Myung Bak Regime's Scenario for Preemptive Strike at DPRK under Fire  
*Rodong Sinmun* Calls for Giving Continuity to June 15 Era of Reunification

To reiterate, North Korea wants the world to know that it has a beef with Lee Myung-bak, which *KCNA* has gone to the trouble of collating at great length. Some hardy and dedicated soul ideally

needs to read and parse all of this. This writer confesses to merely sampling it – life is short, deadlines loom – so what follows is at best a tentative preliminary account.

### Show some respect

Let us begin at the beginning. What so got North Korea's goat on Dec. 30, less than a fortnight after the death of Kim Jong Il and just days after his funeral? The answer, as this timing suggests and as we briefly reported in the last issue of *Comparative Connections*, is umbrage at the way South Korea reacted to those events. The first article – also one of the longest at 1,433 words– is a statement by the National Defense Commission (NDC), North Korea's highest executive body, which outranks the Cabinet. It is headlined: "Lee Myung Bak Group of Traitors Accused of Its Thrice-cursed Crimes."

Though in its way reasoned compared to the name-calling that followed, this is an odd piece that fails to convince. Full of overblown emotion – "even the mountains, rivers, plants and trees seemed to wail" – it thanks others who sent their condolences, but accuses the "puppet group" by contrast of "rubbing salt into their wounds." How so? By putting Southern troops on alert, and letting "over 30 right-wing conservative reactionary organizations flock to the forefront areas to scatter anti-DPRK leaflets whose content was hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK ... Traitor Lee Myung Bak spearheaded all these operations." Also by "blocking south Koreans who wanted to visit Pyongyang to mourn the demise of leader Kim Jong Il ... The traitorous group of Lee turned down all the demands."

Methinks they do protest too much. First, any state faced with such a contingency – the NDC bridles at that word, too – would put its forces on alert. Second, the ROK government is not responsible for the leafleting, which is done by NGOs, much less does it spearhead it. Third, the claim that the South "turned down all the demands" to send mourning groups is a lie. As we reported last time, two such delegations were allowed to go to Pyongyang, while others were indeed forbidden. Given the general state of inter-Korean relations, such a ban is hardly unexpected. I don't believe for one minute that the North really expected any more generous response, let alone had any right or reason to so expect after its twin attacks of 2010. (Even these were added to the charge-sheet: "It is hideous crime that can never be pardoned in any case to dare hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK over its army's self-defensive shell-firing on Yonphyong Island for coping with preemptive provocation in the wake of the 'Cheonan' warship sinking case which is not related to the DPRK." Parse that!)

### Let my people go

Still, one wishes that Lee Myung-bak had had the imagination and cunning to take the North's come-all-ye invitation at face value, and let any South Korean who wanted to make the trip do so. Imagine the queues and chaos at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). That would have called Pyongyang's bluff – or, conceivably, so wrong-footed the North in a positive way as to induce a thaw. The precedent here is 1985, when Chun Doo-hwan surprised everyone by accepting a propagandist Northern offer of flood aid, as Kim Il Sung surely cannot have expected him to. So the North had to deliver: dodgy cement, downright dangerous medicines (quietly warehoused),

and grotty textiles. But Northern ships docked in Southern ports for the first time ever to unload all this tat, and it did usher in a year or so of wider dialogue.

But if that sort of creative diplomacy was beyond Lee's imagining – it was quite startling for the usually wooden Chun for that matter – at least he handled things better than Kim Young-sam back in July 1994. Though he had been due to meet Kim Il Sung barely two weeks later in what would have been the first ever inter-Korean summit, KYS backtracked and went over the top: allowing no condolence visits and taking a rapidly hardening line which, typically, appeared more ad hoc than considered. On that occasion, arguably, North Korea did have cause to be aggrieved. (There is an interesting – if obviously *parti pris* – account by Park Bo-hi, a leading figure in the Unification Church, whose holding US citizenship enabled him to be the only South Korean who made it to Pyongyang for Kim Il Sung's funeral; see <http://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Books/Messiah2/Messiah2-21a.htm>. Also protected by US passports, three senior Korean figures in the church, including Rev. Moon's son Moon Hyung-jin, bore a large wreath to Kim Jong Il's more recent obsequies.)

### Threatening the South, while cutting a deal with the US

Returning to the NDC's diatribe, in 2012 unlike in 1994, North Korea had no real grievance or cause for surprise or alarm about South Korea's low-key and nuanced response to its leader's death. This manufactured anger must therefore be seen not as genuine emotion but a deliberate choice by Pyongyang to ratchet up tension. That first NDC statement already directly threatened not only "traitor" Lee and his circle but also "the conservative media of south Korea": "The veritable sea of tears shed by the army and people of the DPRK will turn into that of retaliatory fire to burn all the group of traitors to the last one and their wailing into a roar of revenge to smash the stronghold of the puppet forces."

Since then, it has been downhill all the way. Alas, we were too sanguine in the last issue of *Comparative Connections* in hoping that such wrath would prove short-lived. Instead it has been unrelenting, and cranked up ever higher at any pretext. On Feb. 25, the regular annual joint US-ROK *Key Resolve/Foal Eagle* war games – an absolutely routine event, as Pyongyang knows – touched off another diatribe from the NDC which *KCMA* headlined: "No Limit to Striking Intensity and Range of Our Army and People." Going beyond threats to "human scum" Lee, this further warned that:

Nuclear weapons are not the monopoly of the US. We have war means more powerful than the US nukes and ultra-modern striking equipment which no one has ever possessed. The US is sadly mistaken if it thinks it is safe as its mainland is far away across the ocean. There is no limit to the striking intensity and range of our army and people to wipe out the aggressors.

US-Korea relations are someone else's bailiwick in *Comparative Connections* – but note the date. This came out a day after US-DPRK nuclear talks ended in Beijing, non-committal at the time, but in fact having crafted the outline of the so-called Leap Day Accord, which both sides would announce four days later – only for it to be aborted by North Korea's satellite launch

(itself abortive), announced in mid-March and conducted on April 13. What to make of all this is anyone's guess, but our point here is that the wrath is synthetic and confected.

A week later, Pyongyang perhaps had more pretext, amid Seoul press reports that a few ROK military units were using images of the Kims, some rudely defaced, for target practice. North Korea's reaction to this *lèse-majesté* was a further escalation of rhetorical fury. This time it was not the NDC but the Supreme Command of the KPA which issued a statement headlined by *KCNA*: "Strongest Warning Served to Those Who Hurt Dignity of Supreme Leadership." Citing no evidence, this asserted that rather than isolated acts by a few units "Lee Myung Bak masterminded the ideas and puppet Defense Minister Kim Kwan Jin [and] chairman of the puppet Joint Chiefs of Staff Jong Sung Jo spearheaded them as 'state tasks'."

### **Millions 'volunteer' to march South**

Now the Northern masses were mobilized as too, supposedly inflamed by this insult. On March 4, *KCNA* said of a mass rally in Pyongyang: "The venue is filled with crowds in the spirit of annihilating enemies to wipe out the traitor Lee and military warmaniacs." The same day it quoted current slogans, such as "We, five million young people, will reduce Seoul to a sea of flames, once an order of the Supreme Command is given." Note that the hostility is extended to not just the Blue House but the whole of Seoul, which has 8 million people – or twice as many if greater Seoul is added.

A day earlier *KCNA* reported that in just 24 hours 1,747,493 young people had volunteered to join the KPA following a call from its supreme command. Slogans included: "We won't return before beating gang to death," "Blood for blood, club to mad-dog," "Let us extirpate in the name of the nation the three generations of family of Lee Myung-bak who doesn't know even about ethics and morality," and "I will be the first man of striking Lee Myung Bak to death" (sic). There were dozens of similar reports of rallies and death threats against Lee in early March. "Korean People Wait for Order to Start Fight for Revenge" (*KCNA*, March 4) threw unexpected light on gender roles in the DPRK by quoting Jang Jong Suk, a woman from Jungdok-dong, Phyongsong City, South Phyongan province: "Being a woman, I am good at killing dogs. I wish I could go to Seoul and kill the dog called Myung Bak." Ho Mong of Minhung-dong in Moranbong District, Pyongyang, used a familiar proverb: "Lee Myung Bak is running amuck like a puppy knowing no fear of the tiger. I am eager to cut at him and his lackeys with my sharpened axe and see their blood." And so on and so on and so on.

### **Smelling a rat**

One might think it could hardly get fiercer than that, but in April a change of animal imagery plumbed new depths. Someone in Pyongyang, for whatever reason, decided to characterize the duly elected president of the Republic of Korea as a rat rather than a dog. This was not original; the idea has been long current in South Korea, where Lee is mercilessly lampooned by his enemies. Another instance, a pun on his name in Korean, is to call him '2 megabytes' – suggesting he has rather limited brain power. This too the North has belatedly discovered.

Still, one hopes even Lee's southern foes would blanch at what the North is doing with this. He was first likened to a rat by *KCNA* in several reports on April 20. One, headlined "DPRK People Vow to Wipe out S. Korean Regime", quoted enraged citizens such as KPA officer Jo Hun Gil: "We can no longer stand the behavior of the Lee Myung Bak group of rats. Such a group should be beaten to jelly at once." *KCNA* added: "He didn't hold his temper to use vulgar words unable to repeat." (sic) With steelworker Ham Kyong Guk, it was back to the old canine slur: "Lee Myung Bak is worse than a beast and little different from scum. This rabid dog should be cut to pieces for insult to the dignity of our supreme leadership." Pang Sun Im of Pyongyang, a woman carrying knives, clinched it: "I have bought these sharpened knives to stab to death the rat-like Lee Myung Bak group. My family is enough to cut this rat and its clan to pieces. It is my desire to dash to the south right now to kill all of those rats."

Words however were not enough. On April 26, *KCNA* noted that "Cartoons Satirizing Rat-like Myung Bak Enjoy Popularity in DPRK." This deserves quotation at some length:

The cartoon "Tear rattish Myung Bak to pieces!" portrays the tightly-gripped neck and body of rat-like Myung Bak and his bloody tongue at a last breathing. "Beat to death the rattish Myung Bak group of traitors!" and "Wipe out rat-like Myung Bak!" depict a rat being bayoneted. "Make clean sweep of the rattish traitors!" shows Lee in flames. "Beat rattish Myung Bak to a pulp!" pictures a sharpened axe cutting off Lee's neck .... The cartoons also include "Wipe out rattish Myung Bak, a dirt of history!", "Beat to death rattish Myung Bak, a human rubbish and bastard!" and "Death to rattish Myung Bak!"

Not content with these vivid descriptions, *KCNA* evidently wants the world's public to join in the fun. The above-mentioned link to 'Cartoons' at <http://www.kcna.kp/tukbo.jsp> links to another page, wittily named <http://www.kcna.kp/2mb/eindex.html>. This is devoted to the rat cartoons, 15 in all, which it reproduces along with captions – hardly necessary – which, as noted above, exult in vile and violent blood-lust. The titles of the cartoons are bad enough:

Myung Bak Strangled to Death  
Let's Crush Lee Myung Bak to Death  
Chongwadae Hit by Lightning  
There Is No Mercy  
Tear Apart Lee Myung Bak to Pieces  
To Kill in Only Two Pieces, Not Desirable  
Lee Myung Bak Caught in Noose  
Lee Myung Bak Struck by Lightning  
"In the Name of Your Mother!"  
Lee Myung Bak Duly Punished  
Rathole Is Not Safe for Lee Myung Bak  
Myung Bak Seized with Plague  
Crow Waits for Death of Rat  
Let Us Throw Away Cold-Blooded Animal Lee Myung Bak  
Lee Myung Bak Caught in Rattrap  
Effigy of Lee Myung Bak Burnt  
Let Us Reduce Den of Rats to Ashes  
Lee Myung Bak Will Find No Hideout

The actual images, and the captions too, are for those with strong stomachs. Let one of the latter suffice. The caption to “Tear Apart Lee Myung Bak to Pieces” reads:

The dirty hairy body of rat-like Myung-bak is being stabbed with bayonets. One is right in his neck and the heart has already burst open. Blood is flowing out of its filthy bottom hole. This is not too much to Lee as he committed only sordid acts of flunkeyism and treachery ... It is the strong will and pledge of the army and people of the DPRK to tear apart Lee Myung-bak to pieces.

### **Menacing the South’s media, too**

All this is disturbing, to put it mildly. Pyongyang is a master of insults and threats, but never before has it gone to such extremes. Moreover these threats are indiscriminating as well as wild. Lee and his associates are the main targets, but a notice issued on April 23 by “the special operation action group of the Supreme Command of the Korean People’s Army” also threatened to attack “paid conservative media” who “worked with blood-shot eyes to build up public opinion in favor of the rats’ group”. This notice names, among others, the broadcasters *KBS*, *MBC* and *YTN*. Yet *MBC* is widely seen (not least by the Blue House) as hostile to Lee and his administration, for instance in 2008’s protests against US beef imports. Indeed *KCNA* has often reported on this and continues to do so. Nonetheless *MBC* was among those threatened with “special actions” which “once [they] kick off ... will reduce all the rat-like groups and the bases for provocations to ashes in three or four minutes, in much shorter time, by unprecedented peculiar means and methods of our own style. Our revolutionary armed forces do not make an empty talk.”

Those still determined to see two sides to everything will note that on April 20 Lee Myung-bak advised Kim Jong Un to privatize North Korea’s collective farms, saying rice would be abundant if he does so. He also decried the expense of the North’s mid-April celebrations of the centenary of its founding leader Kim Il Sung, saying the money would have been better spent on food. (This may be what sparked off the rat campaign.) On May 5, speaking to a young audience on Children’s Day (a holiday in the ROK), he likened North Korea to a naughty kid. For that, *Rodong Sinmun* accused him of “implanting hostility into children’s minds.” Yet just days earlier *KCNA* carried a photo of very young DPRK children pointing toy guns and bayonets at Lee’s picture. As this shows, the North’s stance is simply cynical and hypocritical; it has no genuine hurt or grievance needing to be addressed. Some of Lee’s comments may not be tactful, but they do not remotely compare to or justify the foul threats issued by the North. Besides, by now the poor man must be sorely provoked.

### **Rational, or psycho?**

In an influential article a decade ago, my compatriot Hazel Smith argued against stereotyping North Korea as bad and mad, claiming instead that Pyongyang’s behavior is rational. Such a view is hard to square with this latest farrago, whose juvenile smut-and-slasher porn belongs in the realm of psychopathology. B R Myers’ acute observation that North Korea infantilizes its population – well illustrated in a sad, sick video of adults abusing effigies of Lee: see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktAsAAI\\_soU&feature=topics](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktAsAAI_soU&feature=topics) – may need extending: perhaps it infantilizes its leaders as well.

Whatever doubtful satisfaction this nasty and self-indulgent stuff may give at home (but to whom?), what can be the rationale for publishing it to the world on *KCNA*? In the past year or so North Korea has boosted its online presence: belatedly taking up its allocated country suffix (.kp) and launching new English-language websites for both *KCNA* and, for the first time, *Rodong Sinmun* (<http://www.rodong.rep.kp/InterEn> ). Another DPRK website, *Uriminzokkiri*, has a presence on both *YouTube* and *Twitter*. All this might suggest a public relations campaign toward the outside world. Most countries would consider the likely impact of their public relations, and of particular types of content. Yet for several weeks till at least mid-April, *KCNA*'s English homepage warned all comers menacingly, in bold font, "Anyone hurting the dignity of the DPRK supreme leadership will find no breathing spell in this land and sky." This appears to have been removed recently, so perhaps there is hope yet.

In sum, while one regrets dwelling on and in such sewage, it was necessary. The rat cartoons may raise a snigger, but I have not seen the whole anti-Lee campaign analyzed in any detail, as we have tried to do here. Bottom line: It isn't funny, and it hits a new low for Pyongyang. But then, as David Niven said of Errol Flynn, you always know precisely where you stand with North Korea – because they always let you down.

And that Park Geun-hye is no better

Besides neither convincing nor impressing anyone, the DPRK's shrill and rancid propaganda raises a further worrying question: Are the categories which they actually think with, behind the scenes, in Pyongyang just as crude and unsubtle as the terms that they employ in public? One would hope not, for all manner of reasons. But there is little evidence to the contrary.

A case in point is their treatment of Park Geun-hye, daughter of South Korea's Bismarck: the developmental dictator Park Chung-hee, ROK president 1961-79. Since December, Park Geun-hye has regained the helm of South Korea's ruling conservative party, which she has renamed and made less right-wing on several fronts. Less than a decade ago, in May 2002, Park was feted in Pyongyang – where she dined with Kim Jong Il, no less. (How their respective fathers must have rolled in their graves!) *The People's Korea*, published by pro-North Koreans in Japan, carried a strikingly enthusiastic report of this visit at the time, including a photo of a beaming Park dancing with a little girl at the Mangyongdae Student Palace; it can still be read at [http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/180th\\_issue/2002052501.htm](http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/180th_issue/2002052501.htm) . By this account "the media of the North covered [Park's] every move and televised her activities each day, even in extra midnight reports." A search of *KCNA* confirms this.

Admittedly at this point Park was at odds with the Grand National Party (GNP) and its then leader Lee Hoi-chang, a hard-liner and especial bugbear of the North who went on to lose 2002's presidential election to the center-left's Roh Moo-hyun; just as five years earlier he was narrowly defeated by Kim Dae-jung. (In another indication of how poor North Korea's reading of Southern politics is, even five years later in the run-up to the 2007 presidential election, *KCNA* and others were still ranting against Lee Hoi-chang, even though by then he was a busted flush who had quit the GNP and ran as an independent, winning 15 percent of the vote. Not that they were fond of Lee Myung-bak either, but they had less to say about him – including a surprising



‘benefit of the doubt’ silence from a month before his election until over three months thereafter, when they started putting the boot in and have barely let up since.)

Subsequent DPRK references to Park were more mixed. They ignored her till January 2006, by when she was back in the GNP fold. *KCNA* wrote: “The GNP is now represented by Pak Kun Hye [sic; there are several ways to romanize Korean, and that was how Pyongyang spelt her then], daughter of the ill-famed ‘Yusin’ dictator [the repressive constitution imposed by her father in 1972]. She should sit in the dock before anyone else for zealously supporting the past ‘Yusin’ regime and leading the GNP, a centre of present fascist dictatorial clans.”

Similar occasional sniping continued for over a year, but stopped abruptly in August 2007. For over four years DPRK media had nothing to say about Park Geun-hye. If Pyongyang pays attention at all, they have surely registered that there is no love lost between her and Lee Myung-bak, ever since he snatched the GNP presidential nomination in 2007 which she felt was rightfully hers. They should also have noticed her August 2011 article in *Foreign Affairs*, proposing a shift to “trustpolitik” with the North – an elusive notion, but sufficient to distance her from Lee’s hard line. They will have noted too her abiding popularity with the Southern voting public, as consistently shown in public opinion polls. It was for this reason that by the end of last year a disliked, demoralized, and desperate ruling party felt it had no option but to turn to her, as it had done once before, as the only one who could save it from defeat in 2012’s two elections – parliamentary on April 11 and presidential on Dec. 19.

They also saw her overhaul the party, changing not only its name – to Saenuri, meaning new frontier – but its policies, in a centrist direction. On North Korea specifically, the party now mildly advocates helping the DPRK join the international community rather than trenchantly demanding reform and opening as before. GNP right-wingers are dismayed by the change. Nor will it have gone unnoticed in Pyongyang that Park’s return has indeed redeemed the ruling party’s fortunes; it did much better than expected in April’s elections for the National Assembly, not only remaining the largest party, but even retaining a slim overall majority. Finally, although some rival hats are now in the ring and no one can be sure who will emerge victorious in December, North Korea’s rulers must be aware that Park Geun-hye has a good chance of becoming not only the Saenuri candidate but also South Korea’s next president.

Are they glad? As Eliza Doolittle might say: not bloody likely. On Feb. 2, *KCNA* quoted *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, one of Seoul’s two left of center daily papers, as predictably skeptical of the ruling party’s purported policy changes. (Needless to add, *KCNA* cannot be trusted to be truthful. Its own headline reads “GNP’s Policy Change Dismissed Hypocritical (sic): S. Korean Paper,” and it claims the paper “ridiculed the deceptive policy change.” But the word hypocrisy appears nowhere in the original article, which while critical by no means ridicules; indeed, it says “We praise the efforts of the GNP to accept actively the transformation of the age.” Compare <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201202/news02/20120202-20ee.html> with [http://english.khan.co.kr/khan\\_art\\_view.html?code=790101&artid=201201311240037&medid=enkh](http://english.khan.co.kr/khan_art_view.html?code=790101&artid=201201311240037&medid=enkh)

Since then, DPRK media have let fly at Park – albeit not as often, obsessively or obscenely as they lambast Lee Myung-bak. For example, a *KCNA* headline on March 3 read: “*Rodong Sinmun* Urges Park Geun Hye to Behave Herself;” this quotes the party daily as branding her “a confrontation-minded element as bad as Lee [Myung-bak].” On April 11, *Rodong Sinmun*

claimed that “people of various social strata in south Korea censure Park Geun Hye as [an] arch criminal ... They also brand her as a fascist dictator as bad as Lee Myung Bak.”

Stronger language came on April 6 from the inaptly named National Reconciliation Council. The NRC took exception both to Park’s criticism of the then upcoming DPRK rocket launch, and her “begging someone to ‘stop deportation of human scum to the north.’ She even tries to defend and put forward human scum in the puppet political arena.” The nasty HS phrase is how *KCNA* routinely refers to North Korean refugees and defectors. (Obviously Park would not use it, so *KCNA* has got its quotation marks awry.) Park was indeed among those urging China not to repatriate a particular group of refugees, reportedly with some success, so angry was Beijing about the rocket launch. And Saenuri’s 25 new lawmakers from its proportional representation list (picked by Park, as distinct from those elected by constituencies) include the first North Korean defector ever to enter Parliament in the South – Cho Myung-chul, once an economics professor at Kim Il Sung University, who came to the ROK in 1994.

For all this, the NRC assailed Park as a “political swindler and brazen-faced power-seeker who stoops to any infamy to gratify her political ambition,” and even “a disgusting political prostitute as she used to join hands with the conservative regime and ruling party when the situation turned favorable but coldheartedly turned her back if she found it unfavorable even a bit.” Shorn of the vile sexist slur, the latter judgment does contain a grain of truth regarding Park’s complex political trajectory vis-à-vis the GNP/Saenuri. Until December, she had spent several years in an odd kind of sulk, leading a minority faction but playing almost no part in party affairs. Yet the blame for this belongs at least as much to Lee Myung-bak and his camp – who not only failed to make up with Park after defeating her in 2007, but did their best to deselect her followers in the 2008 parliamentary election. The boot is on the other foot now.

Besides sexism, the DPRK is deeply imbued with racism, as Brian Myers has shown. Talk of blood – inherited, rather than spilled – is no metaphor here. On April 9, a commentator in *Rodong Sinmun* declared: “No matter how hard Park may try to disguise herself with veils of ‘change’ and ‘revamping’ ... she can never hide her true colors as a politician who inherited the bloodline of confrontation maniac (sic).” Moreover, “It is right to say that every serpent has its venom and the blood running in the vein of a dictator can never change.” Strange, then, that a decade ago Kim Jong Il saw fit to invite to dinner such a person – whom his son may yet have to deal with in the Blue House, less than a year from now.

### **We jammin’ we jammin’**

As of early May, North Korea’s threats against the South, although extreme, had remained mere words – with one big exception. On May 2, the ROK Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs (MLTM) revealed that since April 28 some 252 flights in and out of South Korea, including 11 operated by foreign airlines, had experienced jamming of the satellite signals used by their Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation equipment. At first no one would go on the record and point the finger at Pyongyang, but two days later on May 4 Lee Kyung-woo, deputy director at the state-run Korea Communications Commission (KCC), said, “We’ve confirmed that the GPS jamming signals have been stemming from the North.”

This follows similar but more limited jamming incidents in 2010 and 2011, which briefly affected ROK military equipment close to the DMZ. Sources in Seoul then said the North operates vehicle-mounted jamming devices – by one account, bought from Russia – which can disrupt signals up to 100 km (60 miles) away, and is developing longer-range systems.

While this was obviously a grossly irresponsible action, MLTM emphasized that there was no danger. Civilian airliners do not employ GPS as their main navigation system but only as back-up, so those affected simply switched to other methods. Shipping, on the other hand, nowadays relies on GPS. On May 4, the Coast Guard in Incheon, the port for Seoul, said that GPS jamming had hit 122 vessels on April 28. Those affected included a ferry with 387 passengers aboard, a petrol products carrier, and eight of the Coast Guard's own patrol boats. *Yonhap*, the semi-official ROK news agency, quoted a fisherman from Yeonpyeong Island (itself fatally shelled by KPA artillery in November 2010) as saying, "Last Saturday I was sailing toward Incheon when the GPS stopped working, and I almost sailed north."

Needless to add, Pyongyang has not admitted responsibility, but few in Seoul believe this. As of early May, the South heightened its vigilance against not only conventional attack but also another sneaky and deniable DPRK asymmetrical specialty, namely cyber-attack. By May 9, continuing GPS jamming had affected no fewer than 667 domestic and international flights, including 48 by foreign airlines, and 175 vessels. *Voice of America* quoted MLTM as saying that the South was about to complain formally to the relevant international organizations.

## Two kinds of politics: the South chooses

The second week of April offered an instructive lesson in the contrasting political processes of the two Koreas. On April 11, South Koreans exercised their democratic rights, hard-won a quarter of a century earlier in 1987, by voting in parliamentary elections for the ROK's 19<sup>th</sup> National Assembly; those elected will take office May 30 and serve for four years. To be precise, and rather disappointingly, barely half (54.3 percent) of those eligible to vote did so – though this is up eight points compared to last time around, in 2008. Of the 300 members, 246 are elected by single-member constituencies on a first-past-the-post basis; the remaining 54 are selected in proportion to the total votes cast nationwide for each party. So this was a genuine contest and a close one, whose outcome could not have been known in advance.

Against most expectations, including its own, the ruling conservative Saenuri (New Frontier) Party – formerly the Grand National Party (GNP) – narrowly retained control of Parliament with 152 seats (15 less than before) – 127 from constituencies plus 25 from the national vote. The liberal main opposition Democratic United Party (DUP) took 127 seats (106 + 21) – 46 more than it held previously – but not sufficient to become the largest party, as it had hoped. Two main smaller parties experienced contrasting fates. The leftist Unified Progressive Party (UPP) – a coalition which includes some elements not unsympathetic to North Korea, and with whom the DUP had an electoral pact, won 13 seats (7 + 6), up from 5. By contrast the right-wing Liberty Forward Party (LFP) was reduced from 18 to 5 (3 + 2). The same fate befell independents – there were 25 formerly, but will be only three in the new Assembly.

## Whereas the North obeys

North of the DMZ, they do things differently, leaving nothing to chance. The simultaneity was coincidence – the ROK Constitution mandates elections every four years, while in the DPRK the sacred date of April 15, 2012 (Kim Il Sung’s centenary) was set years ago as a focus of celebration. With the death of Kim Jong Il in December, the agenda now included formalizing the power transition to his son, Kim Jong Un. This was effected at two separate meetings – one routine, the other rare. The Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA), the rubber-stamp Parliament, always meets in early April, just for a single day, which suffices to pass the budget and approve whatever else it is told to do. This year, the SPA met on April 13, two days after a rare and more important Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) Delegate Conference. There had only ever been three of these before – in 1958, 1966, and then a long gap until September 2010 when Kim Jong Un first appeared in public. (This is not the same thing as a full Party Congress; those are meant to be held every five years, yet there has been none since the Sixth in 1980 which was when Kim Jong Il was first revealed to the world as his father Kim Il Sung’s successor.)

## Kim steps into daddy’s shoes, lightly tweaked

The late Kim Jong Il officially ruled by holding two posts: chairman of the NDC and WPK secretary general. His son has now duly inherited both positions, but with a slight twist of nomenclature. Just as Kim Il Sung remains ‘eternal president’ despite his having died in 1994, so Kim Jong Il was declared to be eternal WPK general secretary and (at the SPA) NDC chairman, while Kim Jong Un was appointed to the new posts of WPK first secretary and NDC first chairman. He also now chairs the WPK’s Central Military Commission (CMC), having previously been its joint vice-chairman. He was already commander in chief of the KPA, having been named as such within days of his father’s death.

## Kim Jong Un speaks, unlike his father

Friday April 13 – unlucky for some – was an especially busy day. It began with the failed rocket launch, which must have been the talk of the SPA later the same day or at least whispered in the cavernous corridors of the Mansudae Assembly Hall – but no mention in the formal agenda, needless to say. The same day saw the unveiling of large new statues of both deceased Kims – Kim Jong Il apparently forbade statues of himself during his lifetime. April 15, Kim Il Sung’s actual birthday, featured a large military parade which included an apparently new missile (some foreign analysts thought it was a mock-up), on a carrier that looked Chinese; the US said it had questions for China. Notably, at this rally Kim Jong Un did something his father never did – he delivered a public speech, lasting nearly 20 minutes. North Korea seems not to have published the full text, but translations are available:

(e.g. at <http://www.northkoreatech.org/2012/04/18/english-transcript-of-kim-jong-uns-speech> ) and it can be watched on *YouTube* (e.g. at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiJmfUexrco> .)

This was a competent first performance, if hardly a polished one. South Korean netizens commented that Kim jerks his body around a lot. Like his beaming smile – hearty but devoid of sweetness, and reminiscent of the grandfather whom he deliberately so much resembles. This

may be an effort to present a jollier and less formal image than his late father, who in his final years of illness was mostly unsmiling and wooden – as well as going wholly unheard.

The content of the speech, militant in tone, focused mainly on the KPA and security issues. Kim boasted that “Military technological supremacy is not a monopoly of imperialists any more, and the time has gone forever when the enemies threatened and intimidated us with atomic bombs.” Only toward the end did he nod to the economy saying, “It is our party’s resolute determination to let our people who are the best in the world ... not tighten their belts again and enjoy the wealth and prosperity of socialism as much as they like.” But there was no word on how this pledge might be made good, much less any hint of economic reforms.

### **NSS: A Northern ghost at the South’s feast**

Ever since the 1988 Seoul Olympics, South Korea has been keen to show its global influence by hosting major international meetings. The latest of these was the second Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), held in Seoul on March 26-27 (the first NSS was in Washington in 2010). Even more so than November 2010’s G20 Summit, this brought dozens of the world’s most powerful leaders – including those of the US, China and Russia – to South Korea. What they accomplished there is less clear, but it certainly was not what their hosts had once hoped.

As readers will recall, last year North Korea revealed that secret talks had been held with the South. By their account, which was not really denied in Seoul, President Lee Myung-bak had in mind a three-stage process, including summit meetings with Kim Jong Il and climaxing in the latter’s visit to Seoul in March 2012, where presumably he would forswear weapons of mass destruction while a grateful world would embrace and shower him with compensation.

This seemed an extreme case of wishful thinking, even before the fate of Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi reinforced Pyongyang’s resolve never to surrender its nuclear arsenal. Although invited to attend the NSS as an observer, the DPRK predictably disdained, preferring characteristically to denounce the meeting as an “unsavory burlesque,” “a serious criminal act and unpardonable provocation against the north” and so on. Perhaps riled by this, on Feb. 27 President Lee insisted that the North Korean and indeed the Iranian nuclear issues were “not among the main topics for this meeting.” Not so, as it turned out. By announcing its planned satellite launch just 10 days before, on March 16, North Korea ensured that it was high on the agenda – formally and otherwise – at the NSS.

### **Daewoo SME still eyes investing in the North, allegedly**

Seeking sanity in sour times, an intriguing story hints at more positive forms of inter-Korean intercourse. On Feb. 11 the *Dong-A Ilbo* claimed that Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering (DSME), the world’s second largest shipbuilder, plans to set up shop in a new North Korean special zone co-managed with China; not the better-known Rason (Rajin-Sonbong) in the northeast, but Hwanggumphyong Island in the lower Yalu River, close to Dandong and Sinuiju. It quoted DSME as saying it will construct a ship repair dockyard and a steel structures plant in partnership with a Chinese firm, Rilin.

DSME promptly denied everything, yet the *Dong-A* story was detailed and rings true. As *Comparative Connections* reported at the time, back in 2007 in happier days Daewoo was keen to pioneer North-South shipbuilding; just one of many planned joint ventures agreed on in that year's second inter-Korean summit. Specifically DSME was to invest \$150 million in a hull block plant at Anbyon, Kangwon province on the DPRK's east coast; construction was due to start in early 2008. After an ROK team on a site visit in November 2007 noted power shortage as a problem, Seoul proposed to supply electricity across the border as it does to the Kaesong Industrial Complex. The KIC abuts the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), but it cost \$38 million to build power lines over a 10 mile route. To do the same to Anbyon, 80 miles north of the DMZ, would have been a whole other order of magnitude in scale and cost. Yet ships apart, to penetrate that far into the North with weapons of peace – steel pipes, transmitters, transmission roads – would surely have been a valuable investment politically too; it could have led to the South upgrading more of the North's malfunctioning power grid.

But this was not to be. It would be unkind, yet not untrue, to say that Lee Myung-bak “ratted” on the deal. Insisting that denuclearization must precede any large-scale economic projects, South Korea's incoming president in effect reneged on everything that his predecessor Roh Moo-hyun had signed up to in Pyongyang (with no such condition attached). As we have argued here before, this was a fateful misstep for Seoul and Beijing hastened to fill the vacuum.

One can understand Daewoo's embarrassment at the new story. Since the eponymous parent Daewoo group went bust in 1999, DSME has been majority-owned by the ROK government; efforts to privatize it have so far failed. But a year from now, with a new leader in the Blue House – Lee cannot stand again – it will be a different story. If South Korea is to regain the ground Lee has lost in the North, joint ventures with a Chinese partner may now be the best or only way to do this. Of course, if the 2007 summit accords had been implemented no such non-Korean intermediary would have been needed, and a site closer to South Korea's own world-leading shipbuilding bases – seven of the world's ten largest ship-builders are South Korean, but China is catching up fast – could have been developed instead. Now it may be too late.

## Chronology of North Korea-South Korea Relations January – April 2012

Jan. 1, 2012: The customary joint New Year's editorial of the three main DPRK daily papers – *Rodong Sinmun* (Party), *Joson Inmingun* (Army) and *Chongnyon Jonwi* (youth) – calls on all North Koreans to pledge allegiance to Kim Jong Un and become “human rifles and bombs” to defend him. It criticizes South Korea's “confrontational policy” toward the North.

Jan. 1, 2012: In his first such activity without his father, Kim Jong Un visits the 105<sup>th</sup> Tank Division, also known as Seoul Ryu Kyong Su after the commander who led it when it was the first KPA unit to enter the Southern capital in June 1950 at the start of the Korean War.

Jan. 1, 2012: *Yonhap* quotes an unnamed official in Seoul as opining that the North's fierce denunciations of the South are a bid to buy time while Kim Jong Un consolidates his power.

Jan. 2, 2012: In his New Year policy address, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak says that “the window of opportunity always remains open ... if North Korea comes forward with a sincere attitude.” However, “if any aggression occurs, we will strongly respond.”

Jan. 2, 2012: ROK Unification Minister Yu Woo-ik expresses the hope that the DPRK’s new leadership “will make a positive step toward openness and development instead of a negative step toward isolation and backwardness.”

Jan. 3, 2012: South Korea lifts the temporary ban on its citizens visiting the North, which it had imposed on Dec. 19.

Jan. 3, 2012: A mass rally in Pyongyang is held pledge loyalty to Kim Jong Un. Similar events in provincial centers follow the next day, and a youth rally is held in the capital.

Jan. 4, 2012: Korea Economic Research Institute (KERI), a Seoul think-tank, reports that North Korea’s military might is stronger than ever. In 2011 the KPA had a 1.02 million-strong army and record numbers of tanks, warships and air defense artillery. It has fewer combat planes than in 1986, but since the 1990s *MiG-29* fighter jets have boosted quality.

Jan. 4, 2012: Committee for Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) issues a report “indicting the Lee Myung-bak group of traitors for its unprecedented brutal acts during the mourning over the great loss to the nation.”

Jan. 5, 2012: CPRK blasts “traitor Lee Myung-bak” for “vociferating about ‘a window of opportunity,’” calling this “balderdash,” “sheer sophism,” “a shameless jargon,” and “another hideous provocation ... If a change is to be expected in the peninsula, it is only a total ruin of the Lee group which is as good as the living dead.”

Jan. 8, 2012: On Kim Jong Un’s birthday – although this is not mentioned – *Korean Central Television (KCTV)* airs a program praising him as a “genius among geniuses,” especially in military science. The great successor is shown driving a tank and galloping on horseback.

Jan. 8, 2012: ROK Unification Ministry (MOU) reports that in 2011 it spent only 42.6 billion won (US\$36.6 million) or 4.2 percent of its 1.1 trillion won South-North Cooperation Fund – the least since 2000. Projects supported include a Korean dictionary, a family reunion center, the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), and aid to North Korean children via UNICEF.

Jan. 9, 2012: *Rodong Sinmun* avers that “It is necessary to give vent to the pent-up grudge of the Korean people against enemies and make a clean sweep of them from this land.” Lest there be any doubt, this means “the Lee group...heinous confrontation maniacs and thrice-cursed traitors”, at whom “it is imperative to deal sledge-hammer blows.”

Jan. 28, 2012: *Rodong Sinmun*, daily paper of the North’s ruling Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), declares that: “It is the demand of the times and the nation to sweep away the group of outrageous traitors hell-bent on confrontation with fellow countrymen.”

Jan. 30, 2012: ROK ruling Grand National Party (GNP) announces a new policy platform, which includes helping the North join the international community, rather than demanding reform and opening. On Feb. 2, the party changes its name to Saenuri (New Frontier).

Feb. 11, 2012: Seoul daily *Dong-A Ilbo* claims that Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering (DSME), the world's second largest shipbuilder, plans to invest in a ship repair dockyard and a steel plant in the new Hwanggeumpyong joint PRC-DPRK.

Feb. 14, 2012: The late Kim Jong Il is awarded the title generalissimo, hitherto held only by his father, for (*inter alia*) his "immortal contribution to global peace and stability."

Feb. 16, 2012: Kim Jong Il's birthday – now called the Day of the Shining Star – is marked and celebrated very much as it was in his lifetime – with displays of synchronized swimming, exhibitions of Kimjongilia flowers and so forth.

Feb. 20, 2012: North Korea says that a rare delegate conference of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) will be held in mid-April. The exact date is not specified.

Feb. 22, 2012: President Lee urges China to follow international norms when handling DPRK refugees.

Feb. 23, 2012: Kim Jong Un promotes 23 KPA generals including Kim Yong Chol, who is promoted to general. As head of the General Reconnaissance Bureau, Kim is seen by ROK intelligence as behind the March 2010's sinking of the corvette *Cheonan* and other attacks, such as July 2009's DDoS (computer virus) assaults on major ROK and US government agencies.

Feb. 24, 2012: South Korea's National Assembly Committee on Foreign Affairs and Unification calls on Beijing to stop repatriating Northern defectors.

Feb. 25, 2012: Responding to the start of annual joint US-ROK military exercises, the North's National Defense Commission (NDC) threatens a "sacred war" that will "make a clean sweep of the Lee group." It adds, mysteriously, "We have war means more powerful than the US nukes."

Feb. 25, 2012: Kim Jong Un is reported as visiting the southwestern front line, including an artillery unit which fatally shelled the South's Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010.

Feb. 29, 2012: North Korea and the US each announce what becomes known as the Leap Day Accord (LDA).

March 2, 2012: Supreme Command of the KPA issues a statement, headlined by *KCNA* as "Strongest Warning Served to Those Who Hurt Dignity of Supreme Leadership."

March 3, 2012: *KCNA* reports that in just 24 hours no fewer than 1,747,493 young people have 'volunteered' to join the KPA, following a call from its Supreme Command.



March 3, 2012: According to a *KCNA* headline, “*Rodong Sinmun* Urges Park Geun Hye to Behave Herself.”

March 16, 2012: North Korea announces that in mid-April it will launch a rocket carrying a satellite. It affects surprise when the US, South Korea, Japan and many others object that this would be a direct breach of the newly minted LDA.

March 26-27, 2012: The ROK hosts the second Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), bringing many of the world’s most powerful leaders to Seoul.

April 11, 2012: South Korea holds parliamentary elections.

April 11, 2012: Fourth Conference of the WPK is held in Pyongyang. The late Kim Jong Il is proclaimed as the Party’s “eternal secretary general.” Kim Jong Un assumes the newly created post of WPK first secretary.

April 11, 2012: *Rodong Sinmun* claims that “People of various social strata in south Korea censure Park Geun Hye as [an] arch criminal ... They also brand her as a fascist dictator as bad as Lee Myung Bak.”

April 13, 2012: The DPRK Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) – Congress, but not as we know it – holds its annual single-day session.

April 13, 2012: North Korea launches its long-awaited three-stage rocket over the West (Yellow) Sea. It fails about 90 seconds after blast-off. Unusually, Pyongyang admits this.

April 13, 2012: Large new statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, side by side, are unveiled on Mansudae Hill in Pyongyang.

April 15, 2012: Kim Il Sung’s centenary is marked by a big military parade in Pyongyang. Emulating his grandfather but not his father, Kim Jong Un makes his first public speech.

April 19, 2012: President Lee says South Korea needs strong military power, both hardware and psychologically because “North Korea makes provocations when we are weak.”

April 20, 2012: Lee Myung-bak tells the Education Center for Unification in Seoul that “rice will be abundant in two to three years” if North Korea gives up collective agriculture and privatizes its farmland. Conversely, “continued dependence on aid will only produce beggars.” He also urges Kim Jong Un to pay more heed to human rights.

April 20, 2012: In an article headed “DPRK People Vow to Wipe out S. Korean Regime,” *KCNA* for the first time calls Lee Myung-bak “rat-like.”

April 23, 2012: The “special operation action group” of the KPA Supreme Command warns of “special actions” against “rat-like Lee Myung-bak”, ROK media et al.

April 25, 2012: *KCNA* headline claims that “Servicepersons Wait for Order of Action.”

April 26, 2012: *KCNA* headlines today include: “More Rallies Take Place to Vow to Wipe Out Rat-like Lee Group” and “Cartoons Satirizing Rat-like Myung Bak Enjoy Popularity in DPRK.”

April 27, 2012: *KCNA* headline reads “More Rallies Take Place to Vow to Wipe Out Rat-like Lee Group.”

April 27, 2012: ROK Deputy Defense Minister Lim Kwan-bin says South Korea and the US agree that the chances of a new North Korean nuclear test are “very high,” and that this is “possible at any time.”

April 27, 2012: ROK Navy promotes Senior Chief Petty Officer Heo Gwang-joon, a radar operative on the Aegis-equipped destroyer *Sejong the Great*, to master chief petty officer for being the first to detect North Korea’s rocket launch, 45 seconds after-blast-off.

April 27, 2012: *KCNA* reports the chairman of the DPRK General Federation of Trade Unions as declaring that North Korea’s workers are fully ready to form a steel-strong corps and workers division for special action so that they may join the special action group of the Supreme Command of the KPA.

April 28, 2012: Ignoring Pyongyang’s stepped-up threats, some 40 defector activists from Fighters for a Free North Korea send 10 large balloons carrying 200,000 anti-regime leaflets across the DMZ into North Korea from the usual spot, Imjingak pavilion near Paju.

April 28, 2012: *KCNA* reports that Kim Jong Un “guided” a combined forces drill to mark the KPA’s supposed 80th anniversary; noting that combined unit 655 is “ready and able to immediately strike at the heart of the enemy who had attacked the integrity of the DPRK.”

April 28, 2012: *Rodong Sinmun* declares: “It is necessary to make a clean sweep of the rat-like Lee Myung Bak group of bastards”. *KCNA* has four further articles using this phrase.

April 29, 2012: A *KCNA* headline reads: “DPRK Workers Vow to Wipe out Rat-like Lee Myung Bak Group.”

April 30, 2012: *KCNA* claims that North Korea’s coal output has increased “in the spirit of making revenge upon the rat-like Lee Myung Bak group of traitors in south Korea.”

April 30, 2012: President Lee warns that Seoul will respond strongly to any DPRK provocation.

May 2, 2012: Officials in Seoul say that since April 28 252 flights in and out of South Korea have experienced GPS (Global Positioning System) signal jamming. On May 4 the Korea Communications Commission (KCC) directly accuses Pyongyang of responsibility.

