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South Korea Prosecutes its Citizens for Screening North Korean Drama.

The Western Corporate Media often claims that “North Korea prosecutes (or even executes) its people for watching South Korean dramas”.

It’s hard to ascertain if that’s actually the case, as fake news about North Korea is the norm. The only allegations of this phenomena come from unreliable defector testimony of known liars (like Park Yeon Mi), who are rewarded for telling hyperbolic lies; or from dubious South Korean sources like the rightwing Chosun Ilbo.

These hyperbolic claims are then amplified by right wing anti-communist organizations (like Liberty in North Korea) and the US MSM.

However, contrary to these dubious claims, we can ascertain with certainty that South Korea does prosecute people for screening North Korean films.

In fact, it’s not an exaggeration to say that much of what South Korea accuses North Korea of doing can actually be attributed right back to South Korea.

In other words, these claims are projection—not cinematic—,but psychological.

Dangerous Dramas

According to the Jeju Today newspaper, the Yoon government is claiming that screening the North Korean film “*The Story of Our Home*”, shown in South Korea in February 2019 as part of a national reunification festival, violated SK National Security Law. It is now investigating the organizers of the film screening three years later.

The North Korean film is a family drama about how a young teenage girl and her two younger siblings try to adapt to the loss of their mother. The community rallies to support her, but she is stricken with grief and acts out with hostility, especially towards a neighbor who tries to help out in caring, maternal ways. It’s a common dynamic you might see in

any foster or hybrid family here. There's also an older brother, in the military, who is kept in the dark about the loss. There's a math contest, a cooking contest, elegant bike riding—and several punctures—and lots of pastoral greenery.

This is utterly harmless stuff, a story about neighborly kindness—with a wholesome message about studying math thrown in—but the South Korean National Intelligence Service (NIS) is hounding the organizers, the former head and current head of the Jeju branch of the Progressive Party and the Secretary-general of the Jeju Federation of the National Farmers' Association, for violating the National Security Law. They are accused of engaging in “ideological education” and “praising the North Korean system”. The organizers of the screening have argued that the film *was approved by the South Korean government* (Ministry of reunification) itself for screening. The DVD, after the screening, was promptly returned to the ministry.

These prosecutions are happening within the current political context where the South Korean Yoon government is reverting to a full red scare/red-baiting mode, a reversion to the habits of the SK military dictatorships of the 60-80's.

Yoon's Strategy of Denial

The Yoon administration, with the recent promulgation of its Indo-Pacific Strategy, has gone full bore in adopting a confrontational—if coded—military, economic, and political escalation against China. As the identity of the name suggests, South Korea's strategy is in lockstep ideological, military, and political congruence with the US's own Indo-Pacific strategy. This is a strategy developed to contain, constrain, and rollback China's economic development and global/regional prominence, and to prepare for kinetic engagement. South Korea is engaging in this extreme strategy despite the considerable risk this poses to its own economy. It is already seeing harm to its own domestic semiconductor industries.

The Yoon administration's coordination and co-militarization with Japan in the service of this US containment against China, along with its neoliberal policies and massive labor suppression, and its general incompetence—leading to mass catastrophes such as the recent mass crush catastrophe—has resulted in fierce opposition by large numbers of South Korean citizens. To date, they have taken to the streets in mass “candlelight” demonstrations 23 times, on occasion, approaching a turnout of half million according to organizers. They show no signs of abating.

These huge weekly demonstrations have demanded Yoon's immediate resignation along with prosecution of the first lady for corruption. The demonstrations also express strong opposition to US militarization and military exercises, demand the return of South Korean

sovereignty, and charge President Yoon with selling out and betraying the nation. The Yoon administration currently has a 24% approval.

To counter this, the Yoon administration has been stifling and shutting down opposition to its policies with allegations that opposition is derived from pro-North sentiment or even alliance with North Korea. It is currently engaged in a massive political witch hunt of its opponents. It has arrested key top officials of the previous progressive administration, has raided the opposition party headquarters, raided opposition party candidate's (Lee Jae Myung's) house four hundred times and has just subpoenaed him, acts unseen in South Korean constitutional history. It is widely feared that Yoon will try to imprison the former progressive president, Moon Jae-in, possibly for acts of commission or omission in his policy towards North Korea. Even the South Korean military is alarmed: a former four star general, deputy commander of the ROK/US Combined Forces Command denounced Yoon's administration as a "dictatorial regime" that is "suppressing freedom"—a military first.

Republic of Prosecution

President Yoon, a former chief prosecutor, sometimes compared to a "Korean J. Edgar Hoover", had promised during his campaign that he would create a "Republic of Prosecutors" and re-institute a 120-hour work week. (The previous Moon Jae-In administration had painstakingly winnowed down South Korea's working hours—the longest in the OECD—to a 52 hours per week cap). A silver-spooned dunce with no political experience, Yoon had failed the bar exam 9 times. He was pitted against a popular governor, Lee Jae Myung, who had worked—and was injured—in sweatshops since the age of 12 but who had entered law school on a scholarship after taking night school classes. Lee had aced his bar exams.

Needless to say, the US backed the wealthy, underperforming dunce rather than the conscientious over-achiever. Candidate Yoon received the blessing and endorsement of top US leaders and the US power establishment. He was commissioned to publish an article—a public confession of the doctrine of the faith—for the Council on Foreign Relations' journal *Foreign Affairs* magazine, where he detailed his hawkish concordance with US policy against China and his desire to be a global "pivot state"—a clear reference to the "Pivot to Asia".

The Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia" had started the momentum for military encirclement and escalation against China; Trump escalated this hybrid war into the economic domain, initiating a trade and tech war against China. Biden rebranded the

Pivot to Asia as “The US Indo-Pacific Strategy” and Trump’s neo-mercantilist trade war as the “IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework)”, and has since escalated even further with full spectrum sanctions designed to destroy key Chinese industries. Yoon’s roadmap article for Foreign Affairs was widely welcomed and lauded, celebrated as an early Christmas in Washington, effectively the fulfillment of Biden’s wish list for its Korean anti-China strategy.

After squeaking by on the tightest of margins in South Korea’s electoral history, President Yoon has been making good on his promises to the US, shaping, sculpting, and subordinating South Korean military, economic, and foreign interests to align with US policy and goals. To backstop what are clearly unpopular, dissent-and-hardship-generating extreme far right policies—and in fulfillment of his promise of creating a “republic of prosecutors”—Yoon has appointed prosecutors who were subordinate to him to the majority of top administration positions, and prosecuting his opponents without mercy. Anyone who shows the slightest sign of opposition to his foreign or domestic policy has been put in the cross hairs of his army of prosecutors. It’s not an exaggeration to say that Yoon has sent his prosecutorial clown car barreling straight down on the road mapped out in his FP article, with “values” attached as a hood ornament, and “democracy” attached to the bonnet as road kill. The vehicle deployed has been “Rule of Law”, in particular, South Korea’s National Security Laws.

For example, Yoon is claiming that the recent labor strikes in SK organized by the KCTU “*were upon orders from North Korea*“, a hyperbolic claim completely denied by the organizers.

The Devil in Democracy

SK’s national security laws (see [here](#))—are a relic of the past red-baiting military dictatorships—and are some of the most draconian in the world. They have been applied to destroy lives and livelihoods, despite their commonsense-and-human rights-contravening extremism and punitiveness. Revised and massaged several times over the years, they are still imprinted with the core genes of their intent: a political version of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (a medieval guide for witch hunting) to destroy “subversive” thought and movements in the South and to squelch political opposition. Like the *Malleus*, during South Korea’s military dictatorships, they were broadly written, malleable in interpretation & application, and relied heavily on confession extracted under torture. They are outdated and incompatible with any notion of a modern state, let alone

South Korea's much self-promoted "freedom and democracy" and "respect for individual rights" .

For example, Under the South Korean National Security Law, for the act of "praising or sympathizing with" North Korea (in the legislation, NK is always referred to as "anti-state group(s)"), South Korean individuals can be imprisoned for up to 7 years:

Article 7: Praising Or Sympathizing

Up to 7 years in prison for those who praise, encourage, disseminate or cooperate with anti-state groups, members or those under their control, being aware that such acts will endanger the national security and the democratic freedom

If investigation of the KCTU labor strikes shows that they were "upon orders from North Korea", as is claimed by the government, depending on the judicial outcome and the specific crimes they are charged with, the accused *could be sentenced to death* for "commission of anti-state acts under the influence of NK":

Article 4: Commission Of Anti-State Acts

Members of an anti-State group or those who are under the influence of an anti-State organization who commit an anti-State act shall be punished as follows:

+ Those who commit an act as defined by the Criminal Codes articles [92], [97], [99], [250.2], [338] or [340.2] shall be punished as set forth in the Codes.

+ Those who commit an act as defined by the Criminal Codes article [98] or who access, gather, leak, transmit or compromise a national security secret shall be punished as follows:

+ Death, life or minimum 10 years for violating Criminal Codes [115], [119.1], [147], [148]. [164] or [169]. [177.1] or [180]. [192] or [195]. [207], [208], [210], [250.1], [252], [253], [333] or [337], [339] or [340.1, 2]

+ Death, life or minimum 5 years in prison for destruction of public or government buildings or other structures essential for transportation, communication; abduction or seduction of officials; or theft or removal of ships, airplanes, automobiles, weapons or other materials—related to the fore-mentioned functions.

+ Minimum 2 years in prison for promoting or propagating acts defined in [1] or [5] or for creating or spreading false rumors aimed at causing social turmoil.

Meeting with NK officials, as alleged against the organizers could result in a 10 year sentence.

Article 8: Meeting, Corresponding And Etc.

Up to 10 years in prison for those who confer, correspond, or communicate using other means with anti-state groups, members or those under their control, being aware that their acts will endanger the national security and the democratic freedom.

If any of the accused are successfully prosecuted, then those in their vicinity could be charged with “failure to inform”—i.e. failure to “rat out” their friends, neighbors, colleagues, or even family:

Article 10: Failure To Inform

Maximum five years in prison or a fine of 2000,000 won for those who fail to inform the police or security officials of persons who have committed acts defined in [3], [4], [5.1, 3 and 4]. This punishment may be reduced or waved in the case of involving family members.

The film organizers could be charged with “possessing (even temporarily) or disseminating arts” (from NK):

Punishments as defined in [1], [3], or [4] for those who create, import, duplicate, possess, transport, disseminate, sell, or acquire documents, arts or other publications for the purpose of committing acts as defined in [1], [3], or [4] respectively.

Outside of this article, there has been no discernible coverage or outrage in the Western media of these extraordinary developments.

By contrast, Moon Jae In’s slightest peccadilloes—for example, the prevention of anti-North propaganda balloon volleys—were the subject of US Congressional Hearings, Human rights violation allegations, and charges of creeping dictatorship. This new witch hunt, a hallucinatory reversion to the 60’s, looks to have been passed over without comment or criticism in the corporate media.

The fact that South Korea holds such national security laws even on the books gives the lie to the oft-repeated claim that South Korea is some sort of model democracy, part of an “alliance of democracies” partnering with “like-minded values” against “authoritarianism” as the US and Korean Indo-Pacific strategy like to proclaim.

This devil here is not in the details, but in the conception. Summoned by the US as an anticommunist *familiar* to purge the peninsula clean of all challengers to Empire, the Yoon administration is stoking the coals and heating its branding iron again. South Korea is re-entering a dark and dangerous path in service of the Unipolar Empire, and its long-enduring and long-suffering citizens are worried. What is certain is that it cannot find its way out with the map it has.

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