

ON NATIONALISM

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Foreword

Many ideologies and theories have existed in the history of human ideology, and no other ideology was more difficult to understand than nationalism. Owing to different interpretation of the interests of nation and attempts to use nationalism as an ideological means for class domination, various kinds of advocacy including those that run counter to nationalism have appeared on the stage of history in the name of nationalism. For example, in the modern times weak nations upheld nationalism as the banner of their struggle against imperialist aggression, and imperialists justified their aggression as an act in the “interests” of their nations. This created many obstacles in having a correct understanding of the ideology.

In a talk to the senior officials of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea on February 26 and 28, 2002, titled, *On Having a Correct Understanding of Nationalism*, Kim Jong Il makes clear the essence and progressive nature of nationalism and the falsehood and reactionary nature of bourgeois nationalism, correlation between nationalism and communism and between nationalism and internationalism, and President Kim Il Sung’s exploits in solving the question on nation. He also clarifies in a comprehensive way Korea’s approach to nationalism and the tasks to apply it in practice.

This book gives an explanation of the main points of the work.

The Editorial Board

Now is an era of independence, in which the masses of the people carve out their destiny as its master. When independence of a country and nation is safeguarded and its independent development achieved, the destiny of the masses of the people, the members of the country and nation, can be successfully carved out and independent and creative life provided to them.

In order to defend the independence of a country and nation and ensure its prosperity, it is important to have a correct understanding of nationalism. Only then can people achieve the unity of their nation, champion its interests and contribute to the shaping of its destiny.

There have been various kinds of interpretation of nationalism in history, and negative views on it can be said to be prevalent. Particularly, as the imperialists headed by the US imperialists are waging a vicious ideological and cultural offensive of undermining and negating nationalism in an attempt to justify themselves in their aggression on and plundering of other countries and nations, wrong interpretation of nationalism is widespread.

The present reality shows that establishing a correct understanding of the ideology poses itself as an urgent matter in smashing the cunning and pernicious machinations of the imperialists and defending the independence of the masses of the people.

In the work Kim Jong Il analyses the origin and the course of development of nationalism and, on this basis, clarifies its essence and progressive nature.

Nationalism came into being as an ideology for defending the interests of a nation in the course of the latter's formation and development. Although nations differ from one another in the period of their formation, every nation is a social community which has been formed and consolidated historically on the basis of a common kinship descent, language, residential area and culture, and is composed of various classes and strata. There is no person in any country or in any society who exists outside his or her nation, separate from it. Every

person belongs to a class or stratum, and at the same time to a nation, assuming both national character and class character. Class character and national character are inseparable from each other, and so are the demands of classes and the demands of their nation.

As a matter of fact, the classes and strata of a nation entertain different demands and interests owing to their different social and economic functions. However, all the members of a nation have the same stake in championing the independence and character of the nation and attaining national prosperity without distinction of the interests of their classes and strata. This is because the destiny of a nation is precisely the destiny of its individual members; in other words, the latter is dependent on the former. None will be happy with sovereignty and honour of his or her nation being trampled upon and national character disregarded. It is the common feeling and psychology of the members of a nation to love their nation, cherish its characteristics and interests, and yearn for its prosperity. Nationalism reflects this feeling and psychology. In other words, nationalism is an ideology that advocates love for the nation and defence of its interests.

Since people carve out their destiny while living within the nation-state as a unit, genuine nationalism constitutes patriotism. The progressive nature of nationalism lies in the fact that it is a patriotic ideology which advocates the defence of national interests.

Kim Jong Il analyses the reactionary nature of bourgeois nationalism and limitations of the view of proceeding theories on nationalism, and illuminates relations between communism and nationalism and between nationalism and internationalism.

Nationalism emerged as a progressive idea along with the formation and development of each nation. However, it was understood as an ideology that defends bourgeois interests. This is attributable mainly to the historical fact that the newly-emergent bourgeoisie upheld the banner of nationalism and the bourgeois class used nationalism as an ideological means for realizing its class domination.

It is true that in the days of the nationalist movement against

feudalism, the newly-emergent bourgeoisie, upholding the banner of nationalism, stood in the van of the movement. However, it is wrong to think that nationalism came into being in defence of the interests of the bourgeois class from the start. In the modern times, the interests of the masses of the people and the newly-emerging bourgeoisie were basically coincident in their struggle against feudalism and for safeguarding national unity and sovereignty. Therefore, the banner of nationalism upheld by the newly-emergent bourgeoisie reflected the common interests of the nation.

As capitalism developed and the bourgeoisie became the reactionary ruling class after victorious bourgeois revolution, nationalism was used as a means of defending the interests of the bourgeois class. Not satisfied with exploitation and oppression of the other members of their nation, the bourgeoisie resorted to invasion, plunder and war against other countries and nations, justifying their act as the defence of the “interests” of their nation; they described their fascist dictatorship as an inevitable deed for realizing the “interests and right to survival” of the nation, branding the struggle of the masses of the people for democratic freedom and rights, including the right to survival, as being anti-national in that they would undermine the national unity and interests. The typical example of bourgeois nationalism is National Socialism, or Nazism, advanced by Hitlerite Germany.

Thus, the bourgeois class disguised their class interests as national interests, and used nationalism as an ideological instrument for solidifying their class domination. This led nationalism to be understood, among the people, as a bourgeois ideology that runs counter to the national interests.

One should distinguish clearly between true nationalism that loves the nation and defends its interests and bourgeois nationalism that advocates the interests of the bourgeois class. The essence of nationalism is that the ideology reflects the feeling and psychology common to the members of a nation who yearn for independent development and prosperity of the nation and cherish the national

character. Viewing nationalism by this criterion, it is clear that the bourgeois nationalism that reflects the exclusive and selfish demands and interests of the bourgeois class, not the common demands and interests of the nation, is a false version of nationalism that contradicts the genuine nationalism. The interests of the bourgeois class whose nature is selfishness can never be the interests of the entire nation but betrayal of the interests of the nation.

Bourgeois nationalism reveals itself as national egoism, national exclusivism and big-power chauvinism in the relationship between countries and nations; it is reactionary in that it creates antagonism and disagreement between countries and nations, and checks the development of friendly relations between the various peoples of the world.

Kim Jong Il also gives a scientific clarification of the relations between nationalism and communism and between nationalism and internationalism.

It is important to give a correct explanation of the relations between nationalism and communism and between nationalism and internationalism for establishing a correct understanding of nationalism.

Since the socialist and communist movement is a revolutionary movement for realizing the independence of the masses of the people, and their cause of independence that is carried out with the nation-state as a unit develops in close combination with the cause of revolution of foreign countries and nations, it can be said that one has a correct and comprehensive understanding of nationalism only when one has acquired a correct knowledge of the relations between nationalism and communism and between nationalism and internationalism.

This poses itself as a more serious problem as the preceding revolutionary theories of the working class failed to give a correct explanation of it. The preceding theories paid major attention to strengthening the internationalist unity and solidarity of the working class all over the world—the fundamental problem in the then socialist

movement—failing to pay due attention to the national problem. They went so far as to regard nationalism as an anti-socialist ideological trend, because bourgeois nationalism was doing great harm to the socialist movement. They could not give a correct explanation of genuine nationalism as they failed to distinguish genuine nationalism from bourgeois nationalism and considered the relations between nationalism and communism and between nationalism and internationalism with the bourgeois nationalism as a yardstick. This is why progressive people in the past rejected nationalism, considering it incompatible with communism and internationalism.

It is wrong to view communism as incompatible with nationalism.

Communism does not advocate only the interests of the working class.

As communism whose basic ideal is to realize the independence of the masses of the people is built with the nation-state as a unit, it cannot materialize the class interests unless it is based on the idea of love for the country and nation. Communism is an ideology of safeguarding not only the interests of the working class but those of the nation, an ideology of genuine love for the country and nation. Nationalism, too, is an ideology of patriotism that advocates the defence of the interests of the country and nation. Love for the country and the people is an ideological emotion common to communism and nationalism; herein lies the ideological basis on which they can ally with each other. Therefore, it is wrong to pit one against the other, and reject nationalism.

Nationalism does not conflict with internationalism. Mutual help, support and alliance between countries and nations—this is internationalism. Every county has its borders, and every nation has its identity, and revolution and construction are carried on with the country and nation as a unit. For this reason, internationalism finds its expressions in the relationships between countries and between nations, a prerequisite for which is nationalism. Internationalism divorced from the concepts of nation and nationalism is merely an empty shell. Internationalism which checks the independent

development of countries and nations is not internationalism in true sense, and it only serves as a means for realizing national egoism and chauvinism of big powers. Revolutionaries of each country should be faithful to internationalism by struggling, first of all, for the prosperity of their own country and nation. Those who are indifferent to the destiny of their country and nation cannot be faithful to internationalism.

Next, Kim Jong Il explains the achievements of President Kim Il Sung who gave a brilliant solution to the problems arising with regard to nationalism, and clarifies Korea's steadfast stance to nationalism.

He elucidates that Kim Il Sung gave a correct explanation of nationalism and solved the problems of nationalism in the practice of revolution for the first time in history.

Kim Il Sung said that in order to be a true communist one must first become a true nationalist. With a determination to devote his life to his country and fellow-countrymen, he embarked on the road of revolution in his early years and created the immortal Juche idea, on the basis of which he established a Juche-oriented outlook on the nation and scientifically expounded the essence and progressive nature of nationalism. Through a correct combination of class character with national character and of the destiny of socialism with that of the nation, he realized an alliance between communists and nationalists, cemented the class and national positions of socialism and led the nationalists to join the efforts for socialist construction and national reunification. Attracted by his broad magnanimity and noble personality, many nationalists took the patriotic road to national unity and national reunification, making a clean break with their erroneous pasts. Kim Ku, a life-long anti-communist, allied with communists, a patriotic changeover, in the twilight of his life; and Choe Tok Sin, a nationalist, was able to find salvation as a patriot in Kim Il Sung's embrace. Kim Il Sung treasured and championed the independence not only of the Korean nation but also of the peoples of the rest of the world, and devoted all his efforts to the cause of making the whole world independent, as well as to the Korean revolution.

He was the most steadfast communist and, at the same time, a peerless patriot, a true nationalist and a paragon among internationalists.

Kim Jong Il said:

“I also assert, as the leader instructed, that one must be an ardent patriot, a true nationalist, in order to become a genuine revolutionary, a communist.”

Those who fight for their people, their country and their homeland are genuine communists, true nationalists and ardent patriots. Those who do not love their own parents, brothers and sisters cannot love their country and compatriots. Likewise, those who do not love their own homeland and people cannot become communists. For this reason, the Workers’ Party of Korea is inheriting with fidelity Kim Il Sung’s noble idea of loving the country, the nation and the people, and making every effort to rally all the sections of the nation by dint of all-embracing politics, and lead them to the road of patriotism.

Kim Jong Il illumines the important matters arising in applying nationalism in a right way so as to attain the independent development and prosperity of the nation in the present times.

It is not communists but imperialists who oppose nationalism and place obstacles in the way of the independent development of nations at present.

The imperialists are manoeuvring cunningly to realize their dominationist ambition on the plea of “globalization” and “integration.” They claim that the ideal of building a sovereign nation-state or the love for country and nation is a “national prejudice lagging behind the times,” and “globalization” and “integration” are the trend of the times in the present situation, when science and technology are developing rapidly and economic exchanges between countries are being conducted briskly on an international scale.

It is true that science and technology and the economy are developing at a rapid speed incomparable with those of the past as science and technology are developing rapidly and economic exchanges between countries are being conducted briskly on an

international scale. This, however, cannot afford grounds for denying independence and character of each nation and advocating global “integration.”

The masses of the people, the motive force of history, demand that the independence and character of their nation be defended and developed.

Their aspiration and demand for independence grow stronger as dominationism and plundering are the incorrigible nature of imperialists and, in particular, they have become arrogant enough to openly pursue domination of the world by means of force after the end of the Cold War. The development of science and technology and economic cooperation on a worldwide scale can be significant only when they contribute to the independent development of nations and sustaining of the national character. In the situation in which the sovereignty of a nation is violated and its national character obliterated, its economy can never develop; and even if it develops, it can never bring benefit to its members. The more science and technology develop and economic exchanges are activated on a worldwide scale, the greater the aspirations and demands of the masses of the people to defend and develop the independence of their nations and national characters become. And accordingly, every country and nation carves out its own destiny independently with its own ideology, system and culture. Such being the situation, there can never be a political, economic, ideological and cultural “integration” of the world. The US manoeuvres for “globalization” and “integration” are aimed at turning the world into what they call a “free” and “democratic” world styled after the United States, and thus bringing all countries and nations under their domination and subordination.

The present is an era of independence. Human history is propelled by the struggle of the masses of the people for independence, not by the dominationist ambition and aggressive policy of the imperialists. The manoeuvres of the imperialists for “globalization” and “integration” will be frustrated by the vigorous efforts of the peoples

of the world who are aspiring after independence.

All the countries and nations should resolutely reject the manoeuvres of the imperialists for “globalization” and “integration,” and staunchly fight to preserve the excellent characteristics of their individual nations and safeguard their independence. Korea frequently emphasizes the Korean-nation-first principle so as to preserve the national character and defend the independence of the nation.

The Korean-nation-first spirit means the pride and self-confidence in the greatness of the Korean nation and ideological emotion which is displayed as determination and will to add eternal glory to it. Only when one displays to the full the spirit that one’s nation is best, can one safeguard and glorify the dignity and honour of one’s nation, exalt the excellent characteristics of one’s nation and contribute to the prosperity of the nation in the face of any difficulties and trials. Now the Korean-nation-first principle serves as a mighty ideological and spiritual weapon for propelling the struggle of the Korean people to safeguard the interests of the nation and realize the independence of the nation.

A most important task facing the Korean people in championing and realizing national independence is to reunify the country.

The issue of Korea’s reunification is, in essence, to reconnect the vein of the nation severed by foreign forces and realize national independence.

The Korean nation, which has inherited a time-honoured history and culture and the tradition of patriotism, has been divided into the north and the south by foreign forces for more than half a century.

The division of the territory and the nation is blocking the way for the nation’s concerted development, and inflicting untold misery and hardship upon it.

National reunification is not only a vital demand but also the unanimous will and aspiration of the entire Korean nation.

The historical Pyongyang Meeting and the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration in 2000 ushered in a new era of great national unity and independent reunification.

The North-South Joint Declaration stipulates all the principles and ways for solving the problems arising in reunifying the country by the united efforts of the Korean nation itself. The declaration is a programme of national unity and a general principle of national reunification, based on the idea of “by the Korean nation itself”; it is permeated with the spirit of loving the country and people. In supporting and thoroughly carrying out the declaration lie the substantial assurance for independence, peace and national reunification and the criterion upon which to distinguish between genuine nationalists and traitors to the nation.

Holding aloft the North-South Joint Declaration, the Korean nation is waging a nationwide struggle to accomplish the historic cause of national reunification without fail.

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Kim Jong Il thus gives in the work a profound explanation of principled matters and ways for understanding nationalism in a new way and solving the problems with regard to nationalism.