

Exchanging Fire on the Korean Peninsula

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The 38th parallel dividing the two Korean nation states may be the most potent physical manifestation of antithetical idealism subsisting into the 21st century. From its guerilla warfare induced separation in 1945, to the highly touted [present day threat of sacred war](#) – the ideologies of the two opposing Korean nation states have worked to the advantage of powers largely using Korea as a proxy. In the south, the oligarchical cadre of President Lee Myung Bak has worked ad nauseum to dismantle the infrastructure of former President Kim Dae-Jung's sunshine policy toward the northward regime. In an unfettered embrace for the military industrial complex, Lee has further aligned with the Pentagon and the Obama administration to secure an influx of state-of-the-art-military technology.

To the North, ideology has always been far more relevant than economics. Beneath the [first signs of Chinese-style market reform](#) and the increasing presence of special economic zones, the effectiveness of state mythology surrounding its deified leadership may soon gently begin to be challenged as North Koreans learn more about foreigners and the world beyond their borders. Since its inception, the Northern population has been [subjected to vigorous domestic propaganda](#) espousing the pristine virtuousness of a uniquely homogenous Korean race – protected from the evils of the outside world under the everlasting paternal care of the Great Father Leader, General Kim il-Sung. Although always second to firepower, economic legitimacy appears to be more of a priority following the third dynastic handover into the remarkably stable Kim Jong-Un regime.

The threat of war has permanently occupied the Korean peninsula since the existence of its two nation states, with each side seeking to wholly absorb the other into its ideological and economic orbit. The South's undisputed economic dominance makes it naturally suited to lead integrative efforts toward much needed reconciliation on the peninsula. Under the publically loathed chaebol regime model of Lee Myung Bak, the prospects of a mutual bloodless reunification appear stark. As one state [begins to manufacture its own fighter jets](#) and increasingly expands its arsenal of advanced military technology – the other brandishes a collection ageing Soviet-made machinery, suspected to be largely obsolete. Between the artillery exchanges of a hypothetical Korean Holy War, it must be asked – is South Korea really prey or predator?

Recent tension on the peninsula in the form of US-ROK Combined Forces Command drills reignited an ongoing stream of public analysis. The war games conducted on February 20th, 2012 were negligently held in a disputed area of the West Sea. Following an exchange of threatening rhetoric, [the ROK began evacuating residents of Baengnyeong Island](#), located just south of the maritime border with North Korea. Prior to the commencement of military exercises, the [North warned the ROK "not to forget the lesson"](#) of Yeonpyeong Island, where four civilians were killed in a Northern bombardment in 2010 after [the South began firing shells into North Korean territorial waters](#) as part of a live ammunition drill.

Fortunately, the North did not respond to the most recent US-ROK Combined Forces Command exercise, perceiving it to be a “premeditated military provocation.” Korean news sources report [an estimated 5,000 live rounds fired during the exercise](#), all of them falling into South Korean waters. The drill was conducted over two hours, involving Cobra attack helicopters, self-propelled howitzers and Vulcan cannons. Pyongyang’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) warns that [North Korea is fully prepared for war and the complete collapse of ties between the two Koreas](#). In response to further planned exercises, the North’s National Defense Commission (NDC) has stated “Now that a war has been declared against us, the army and people are firmly determined to counter it with a sacred war of our own style and protect the security of the nation and the peace of the country.”

[The upcoming US-ROK drills include Key Resolve](#), a computerized command post exercise involving 200,000 troops launching on February 27th, 2012 and continuing until March 9th. Further joint air, ground and naval field training exercises under the moniker of Foal Eagle, will be held from March 1st to April 30th, 2012. In anticipation of the planned joint military exercises, [Kim Jong-Un has reportedly visited front-line military units](#) in the southwestern region responsible for the Yeonpyeong Island shelling in 2010. Amid the tension of impending conflict, the US-ROK Combined Forces Command [has fully mobilized its surveillance radar, with reconnaissance planes and F-15K fighters on emergency standby](#). The DPRK’s 4th Army Corps and other front-line units operate on heightened alert while monitoring the mobilization of allied troops. The Associated Press has confirmed [Washington’s use of U-2 aircrafts from South Korea’s Osan Air Base](#) to conduct monitoring over North Korean airspace.

Although it’s irresponsible to deny South Korea’s sovereignty and the vibrant economic achievements of the people within it, the nation’s current leadership has worked to further reduce the country into an economic and military protectorate of the United States. Under President Lee Myung Bak, the globalmultifaceted strategic partnership between Seoul and Washington has pressured the ROK into [deploying its military personnel to more than a dozen countries](#), including Afghanistan Somalia, Lebanon and other fronts in the mythicized War on Terror. [South Korean troops have also joined Cobra Gold](#), the United States’ largest multilateral exercise in the Asia-Pacific region in conjunction with Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore.

As policy makers in Seoul’s Blue House continue propagating an unbalanced emphasis on US relations, the ROK is forced out of emerging markets in the Middle East as a result of the expanding blanket of US sanctions in the region. In addition to an increased global presence of ROK troops, South Korea has been cajoled into the suspension of its crucial trading partnership with Iran. [Kim Keun-sik, a North Korea analyst at Kyungnam University elaborates](#), “Seoul’s participation in sanctions against Iran is the worst trap of the Korea-US alliance. It is not aimed at deterring the North (which is the initial purpose of the alliance) nor at peacefully resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.” As Seoul is dragged into complying with American militarism, relations between Pyongyang and Tehran have become increasingly more intimate.

As [Korea braces for the spike in oil prices](#) after freezing Iranian petrochemical and oil imports [at the behest of US assertion](#), Lee Myung Bak personally traveled to the UAE, Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia in search of new trading partners. South Korea and Saudi Arabia subsequently agreed to [significantly bolster their economic and defense cooperation](#), with talks of exporting ammunition and howitzers to the feudalistic monarchy. Fortunately for American arms manufacturers, the ROK has a large appetite for high-end fighter jets. Boeing

is vying to be a beneficiary in [Korea's largest ever arms procurement deal](#) with their F-15 Silent Eagle (F-15SE). Korea plans to further purchase 60 fighter jets with an enormous budget of \$7.3 billion. Lockheed Martin and the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company (EADS) are also competing to win armament deals. In an effort to counter North Korean submarine attacks, the [ROK has allocated an additional \\$565,000 of its 2012 budget for plans to establish a submarine command](#).

While the threat of provocation from Pyongyang provides an opportune pretext for militaristic expansion, South Korea's [controversial \\$970 million joint military base on Jeju Island](#) (the ROK's southern most territory, parallel to the DMZ) exists to fundamentally project force toward China in the event of military conflict. With sheer disregard for the ecological physiognomies of Jeju Island (recognized by UNESCO) and the concerns of the island's protesting residents, the joint base would host up [to 20 American and South Korean warships, including submarines, aircraft carriers and destroyers](#) once completed in 2014. China has further called the presence of [Aegis anti-ballistic systems](#) on Jeju island a [dangerous provocation](#). Under the leadership of President Lee Myung Bak, the South Korea arms industry has expanded to new heights; with a planned increase of \$4 billion in exports by 2020, the ROK would be the 7th largest exporter of arms in the world.

Korea Aerospace Industries is currently joining with Lockheed Martin to produce a [T-50 fighter jet, intended for the Israeli military](#). Although Israel recently finalized a deal to purchase thirty M-346 trainer fighters from an Italian competitor, the potential for [future defense contracts with Middle Eastern nations such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar seem expectant](#). While the ROK has recently [developed the world's fastest unmanned aerial vehicle \(UAV\)](#), it still has pressed Washington to sell its RQ-4 Global Hawk spy planes – likely to reverse engineer the vehicle as a template for future Korean-made models. The ROK's state-run Agency for Defense Development (ADD) has launched a \$5.35 million bunker-buster development project to be used for precision strikes against military strongholds in the North by 2013. The project was announced shortly after South Korea finalized a [\\$71 million arms agreement](#) with the US to import American Bunker Buster explosives.

Although a conflict on the Korean Peninsula would almost certainly draw in larger regional powers such as the United States and China, there is little doubt regarding the military viability of both Korean nations on their own. While much of their arsenal is outdated, the DPRK's 1.2 million people under arms make the North Korean military a credible force. In an effort to defend itself against the Yankee Colony to the South, [the DPRK is attempting to build road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles](#). The North's [BM25 Musudan](#) has a potential range of around 4,000 kilometers, allowing it to potentially strike US bases in South Korea, Guam, and Japan. It also possesses the [Taep'o-dong-2](#), which could [potentially strike the continental United States with an extremely reduced payload](#).

North Korean ballistic technology appears to be constructed from components of Russian origin; analysts such [as David Wright of the Union of Concerned Scientists' point out](#) that the engines on the North's Unha-2 launcher are essentially based on the Soviet Scud-B missile. In sharp contrast to the modernity of the ROK's military technology, the North's most modern undertakings are based off of the Soviet R-27 sea-launched ballistic missile, first deployed in 1968. The DPRK is also attempting to use a dated American UAV purchased from the Middle East as a basis for its own unmanned attack aircraft program. After North Korean modifications, the US-made MQM-107 Streaker's 1970s-era technology [would serve as an enhanced version of the German WWII-era V-1 Buzz Bomb](#).

The extremely limited amount of modern equipment in circulation is largely based on modified 1960s-era missile technology, which appears to see little to no actual testing. Despite its large numbers, extreme isolation has left troops in the North with a questionable amount of practical training under its exceedingly bureaucratic chain of command. The North's domestic missile development program is more limited than generally assumed, with easily visible and immobile long-range missile launch sites. [US congressmen belonging to the House Armed Services Committee have voiced concern](#) over the North's road-mobile ICBM program and its capacity to hide launch platforms. While Northern special ops forces could undertake campaigns of guerilla war for some time and inevitably deal heavy damage onto the South with artillery shells and missiles, the North's capacity to sustain a large-scale effort without Chinese backing is limited with an American presence on the Peninsula.

Rather than encouraging openness and trade, regime change in the North has long been an open goal for the United States in their effort to push sanctions against the Communist state since its inception. [Documents authored in 2009 by the US think-tank, The Council on Foreign Relations](#) illustrate a military contingency plan involving the stationing of up to 460,000 foreign soldiers into a post-regime North Korea to its capture nuclear arms and ballistic missiles. The document also highlights the need to form a compliant transitional government acquiescent to market liberalization and privatization. Although [the regime has acknowledged its possession of a nuclear deterrent in its propaganda](#), any further specifics on the North's nuclear program are largely subject to speculation.

In January 2004, [US nuclear scientist Siegfried Hecker visited the North's Yongbyon Nuclear facility](#). Hecker testified before US Congress that he saw no evidence of a nuclear bomb, although he acknowledged that the North possessed weapons-grade plutonium. Shortly after in September 2004, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su-Hon defended announcements that the North has turned plutonium from 8,000 spent fuel rods into nuclear weapons before the UN General Assembly, citing defense against the US nuclear threat. In 2005, the North resumed its nuclear program when the US refused to complete construction on two light-water reactors promised in an Agreed Framework aimed to halt the North's program. Following a missile test in 2009, the [North vowed to reject pressure to denuclearize and informed the IAEA that they would resume their nuclear weapons program](#).

Hecker visited the [Yongbyon nuclear facility again in November 2010 and reported on its increased capabilities](#), however noting that the experimental light-water reactor he was shown was still in the early stages of construction. Former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il presided over an economic collapse and an unprecedented famine in the 1990's. His entire legitimacy derived [from a highly propagated military first approach that advertised the newfound security of the regime](#), "the Dear General successfully saw the acquisition of a nuclear deterrent that would protect the Korean race forever. Truly, the son had proven himself worthy of his great father." While the status of such a nuclear device is largely subject to speculation, any attempts to force denuclearization by the International Community through the Six Party talks will likely result in failure.

Denuclearization is akin to the regime committing political suicide, quelling its only bargaining chip with the outside world. Regardless of the actual progress toward constructing nuclear arms, the North's weapon is a source of pride for its people, aimed to further defend itself against the US forces responsible for killing nearly a third of its population in aerial bombardments during the Korean war (an amount far surpassing the civilian casualties of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Under foreign invasion, the North would become increasing more belligerent if faced with China's military neglect.

China would almost certainly stand to defend its North Korean ally under siege. In addition to a heavily militarized Peninsula, each side is backed by opposing military superpowers. The sensitivity of the region is marked by wild fluctuations in the South Korean stock market at the first sign of tension or instability. China maintains the largest standing army in the world with 2,285,000 personnel and is [working to challenge the regional military hegemony of America's Pacific Century with its expanding naval and conventional capabilities](#). China has moved to [begin testing advanced anti-satellite \(ASAT\) and Anti Ballistic Missile \(ABM\) weapons systems](#) in an effort to bring the US-China rivalry into Space warfare. The conflict on the Korean peninsula has the potential to further threaten global security, not due to North Korean belligerence, but rather to the ramifications of warring super powers.

The North would only ever use a nuclear device if its existence were directly threatened, as a last resort if the nation came under attack from outside forces. For this reason, the diplomatic strength of the next South Korean President is crucial to peace on the Peninsula. Lee Myung Bak has negligently encouraged a hardline stance on relations to the North, a far cry away from the policies of his predecessor, Kim Dae-Jung, the only South Korean President to visit the North during a summit in 2000. The South will host two upcoming elections this year, the National Assembly in April 2012, and a Presidential election in December 2012; the actions of the next administration will be not only fundamental inter-Korean relations, but also to economic cooperation with the United States.

[President Lee Myung Bak's approval ratings now stand at an appalling 27.6%](#), with the opposition Democratic United Party (DUP) seen as the most proficient with regards to handling job creation, North-South relations, and the redistribution of wealth. Lee, along with his relatives and other members of his administration are currently being investigated by prosecutors for [illicitly using insider information to gain profits from purchasing stocks](#) from a Korean firm awarded exclusive rights to develop a diamond mine in Cameroon in 2010. The Lee family has been involved in [several unprecedented stock manipulation and money laundering schemes](#). In addition to [presiding over a 23% increase in consumer inflation](#), Lee [has been accused of using public funds to purchase a private residence](#), while spearheading the increase of domestic internet censorship and surveillance.

[Under the ROK's National Security Act \(NSA\), Lee's regime has targeted](#) an organization called 'Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea' due to their advocating the closure of US army bases and stance against military drills. The organization has been involved in the campaign against the construction of the planned Jeju Island naval base and the heavy-handed conduct of the police and military in quelling dissenting villagers and activists. Members of an NGO which presented alternative findings regarding the alleged North Korean sinking of the Cheonan corvette ship in 2010 were heavily threatened by the South Korean government, which mobilized citizens to protest against experts who doubted the official conclusion. Under President Lee, the NSA has been used to indefinitely detain human rights defenders and citizens for voicing their political views on sites such as Twitter. In late 2011, [a political opposition candidate was sentenced to a year in jail for participating in a radio podcast championing free speech](#).

[Lee Myung Bak's government has also been exposed for selling information](#) such as the resident registration numbers, names, and addresses of South Korean citizens en masse to private bond firms and other civilian institutions. DUP opposition leader, Han Myeong-sook has [called for the mass resignation of the cabinet and an apology from President Lee Myung Bak](#) for the corruption and irregularities that have plagued his administration. The [DUP has ignited public appeal for pledging to scrap the publically loathed KOR-US Free Trade](#)

[Agreement](#) when it enters office, much to the dismay of the US government. The FTA would be the largest U.S. trade pact since the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

As the United States advertises its stake in the Asia-Pacific century, officials have used the threat of North Korea to maintain an unpopular military presence in the region, declaring it central to 21st century national security. In the face of aggressive opposition by the South Korean & Japanese public, the U.S. Pacific Command may further its agenda by conveniently exacerbating the belligerent rhetoric of Pyongyang – only to further encircle a far more powerful China [in their effort to develop new weapons, such as the world's first anti-ship ballistic missile](#). Much to the dismay of US political elites such as the cantankerous Senator John McCain, the Obama administration has approved the planned consolidation of American troops in South Korea to bases south of Seoul by 2016.

The United States currently maintains 28,500 troops in more than 100 bases across South Korea. [The planned consolidation does not warrant a personnel reduction](#), nor does it address the rising demands of the Korean public and their longing for national sovereignty – rather, it highlights the fact that [the Pentagon is having an increasingly more difficult time balancing their chequebook](#). Former CIA director turned United States Secretary of Defense, [Leon Panetta assured lawmakers that US military power in the Asia-Pacific region won't be debilitated by proposed steep budget cuts](#). The US already has eleven carriers in the Pacific area and has [established deals with Australia for a permanent presence in the Northern Territory](#); policy makers are working steadfastly for a similar agreement with the Philippines.

Under the proposed consolidation [cited in the Strategic Alliance 2015 Roadmap](#), the wartime operational control of Korean forces will transition from the US-ROK Combined Forces Command to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff by December 2015. The US forces based in Korea will consolidate into the United States Korea Command, or US KORCOM. The US will maintain its current level of 28,500 troops, while cutting nearly half of its bases immediately South of the DMZ due to proposed budget restructuring. The next South Korea administration would aggregate mass public support by reasserting the ROK's national sovereignty and further working to build a conducive relationship with the North by proposing new economic ties and eliminating US presence on the Peninsula.

The leadership of both Korean nations must avert further conflict at all costs. Experts at the Pentagon have estimated that [the first ninety days of such a conflict may produce 300,000 to 500,000 US-ROK military casualties](#), in addition to a civilian causality rate in the millions. The negative ramifications for such a conflict would destabilize the global economy and potentially lead the United States and China into direct military conflict. [China has already secured rights to many of North Korea's natural resources such as iron ore and coal](#); the DPRK has begun cheaply selling off the development rights of mineral resources to China in exchange for foreign currency. The North Korean government has indicated that the value of the minerals buried in its soil was roughly \$6.1 trillion as of 2008. As the prospects for a new Korean war never fade, China is now the beneficiary of wealth that should rightfully be used to fund reunification efforts on the peninsula.

The propagation of a future Korean conflict has the potential to serve as a mechanism to further restructure the world economic power structure, to the dictates of the grand chessboard. Geopolitical events of the 20th century follow a directed history of managed conflict, where powerful Western banking families and their surrogate agencies employed a

strategy of Hegelian Dialectic to bring Democracy, Capitalism and Communism to the world stage. The work of British researcher and author Antony Sutton detailed [how the global banking elite financed and nurtured the Soviet Union](#) from its inception, providing economic and military aid with US taxpayer dollars. In the [concluding chapter](#) of his book, [“The Best Enemy Money Can Buy.”](#) Sutton exposes how the Soviet-backed North Korean Army used machinery either built in plants with U.S. Lend-Lease equipment or from Russia’s Gorki automobile plant, built by Henry Ford.

China and the Soviet Union contributed heavily to [North Korea’s first missile program in the early 1960s](#), based on technology developed by the United States. In 1994, the Swiss multinational giant Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) was awarded a \$200 million contract with the North Korean government to install two light water nuclear power stations on the nation’s east coast following a deal with the US to freeze Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program. Donald Rumsfeld, one of the Bush administration’s most vocal opponents to North Korea, [presided over the contract with Pyongyang](#) when he was an executive director of ABB. The U.S. State Department claimed that the light water reactors could not be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium.

Henry Sokolski, head of the Non-proliferation Policy Education Centre in Washington [disputed the claims of the US Government](#), offering, “These reactors are like all reactors, they have the potential to make weapons. So you might end up supplying the worst nuclear violator with the means to acquire the very weapons we’re trying to prevent it acquiring.” In 2002, the [Bush Administration released \\$95 million US taxpayer dollars to begin construction of Pyongyang’s light water reactors](#), as part of the Agreed Framework. Just as Iraq became a threat to US security after Donald Rumsfeld armed Saddam Hussein with chemical and biological weapons, agents of globalism have engineered the North Korean threat.

The purpose of Globalism is to form a centrally managed sociopolitical system based on the Chinese model of authoritarian-capitalism. In order for this to be implemented, the living standards of so-called developed countries must be eroded while the standards of developing countries must be raised. Under the practice of fractional reserve banking, Central Banks have manipulated an economic climate favorable to BRICs nations, while simultaneously bankrupting the United States and Europe with unregulated money printing and destabilizing Free Trade Agreements. [Much to the enthusiasm of Goldman Sachs](#), trade between developing countries will soon overtake trade between developed nations. In the expanding economies of developing countries, [the number of households earning over US\\$50,000 is set to double by 2020](#). The [utter decay of the United States manufacturing sector](#) is not due to corporate maleficence, it is to reposition China in the world power structure.

In exchange for economic incentives and national security, nearly every South Korean administration has played junior to American interests, most prominently with President Lee Myung Bak. If another major conflict emerges on the Korean peninsula, joint US-ROK forces backed by an exhausted Pentagon would struggle against the military capabilities of China – Russia may be drawn into the conflict as well to protect their economic interests in North Korea. In the case of a joint Chinese-North Korean victory, China would formally emerge as the world’s military super power. Irrespective of geopolitical speculation, the Korean Peninsula once hosted warring superpowers – the continual orchestration of conflict for over six decades shows potential for another such conflict and its capacity to shift the world power structure to the managed dictates of globalism.

Article originally posted here: [Exchanging Fire on the Korean Peninsula](#)

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