

## Dancing Around the Flag Pole

The People's Daily is continuing to run commentaries on the situation Korea. They are not pleased that the South Koreans are continuing to hold large live fire exercises in the vicinity of the DMZ. This article is dated 24 Dec 10: 0827 Beijing time. ( <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7241142.html> ).

*One month after a deadly exchange of artillery fire, the two Koreas ramped up rhetoric Thursday, with South Korea's president pledging unsparing retaliation if attacked again and a top North Korean official threatening a nuclear strike if provoked.*

*South Korean troops, tanks and fighter jets put on a thundering display of force as President Lee Myung-bak visited soldiers at a base near the border, while North Korea marked a key military anniversary by lashing out at Seoul for instigating war.*

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*China, which has provided North Korea with humanitarian aids including food and medicine, has pushed for a resumption of the disarmament talks as a vehicle for dialogue.*

*"The current situation remains highly complicated and sensitive," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told reporters. "We appeal to the relevant parties to keep calm, exercise restraint, and adopt responsible attitudes and do more to ease the situation and safeguard peace and stability on the Peninsula."*

In this additional article, the PRC attempts to foist some of the blame off on the United States. ( <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90002/96417/7238362.html> ). this article is signed by Li Hongmei.

*People could not help but wonder what the U.S. intends to do----to bring the Korean Peninsula back to peace as it always preaches, or to push the Koreas to the brink of an all-out war? Evidently, military exercises near the NLL is sensitive, as during the regular show-of-force drills, to which Washington has always openly and firmly given strong backing, a miscalculation or a stray test firing could spark a clash or ignite a tit-for-tat fire exchange which could quickly spiral out of control, if it is not a second Korea War, spelling disasters for both sides.*

*Additionally, Pyongyang regards military exercises by South Korea and the United States with genuine unease, fearing the maneuvers could be a smokescreen for a real attack. Therefore, the North will, on the one hand, remain nuclear-armed at any cost, and on the other, it is readying to take what the U.S. and its allies see as reckless actions.*

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*And, neither side could gain from a war-torn Peninsula. A reunification predominated by the South will never occur. Likewise, North Korea will definitely face a more bitter reality and its people suffer more.*

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*Further, the U.S. should by no means pressure China by taking advantage of China's peace-seeking mindset, or pacifism as it deems, in that China is unwilling to involve in any crisis, but it has little fear of any risks therefrom.*

***It is a crystal clear point that if the disaster simmering on the Korean Peninsula could put China into the knee-deep water, there must be somebody else who would get drowned.*** (Bold mine.)

Please read both articles for more important information.

**Analysis.** The second article precedes the first by three days or slightly after the YP Do live fire exercise. Even though the biography of Li Hongmei says that he is a staff writer, I suspect he is more than that or that his name was appended to someone else's writing or at least someone "suggested" what Mr. Li should say. Since the People's Daily is the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, threatening lines like the last paragraph in bold would not be allowed to be published without official sanction even with the weak disclaimer. This is not even a well veiled threat.

Also read seriously the paragraph where the author talks about the reunification of Korea. *A reunification predominated by the South will never occur.* We must respect the fact that this may well be a statement of PRC policy. They raise the specter that the PLA may again intervene if there is a war in Korea. General MacArthur may get his wish even from the grave.

The first article underscores the PRC's anxiety over the Korean situation. Even though the situation is of North Korea's making due to their sinking of the Cheonan, the PRC wants everybody to forgive and forget. They have not yet been able to comprehend that this South Korea government is not prepared to do either. This tactic always worked before. Kim makes a mess and gets rewarded for it. Not this time.

Nor is the PRC happy that the US is fully supporting South Korea in its rejection of Kim's pleas for help. That puts the PRC on the hook to keep North Korea going. They must feed both the North Korean people and Kim's ego. One costs them a lot of money. I'm not sure what the other costs them.

With any luck, the recent live fire exercises may be the last for a while as we settle down to celebrating Christmas and the coming new year. No problems have been solved only postponed. They will be no less tractable in the future. They may be even less tractable if the transition to "Clueless Captain" runs into any serious problems. Kim may come to believe that more "resolute military action" in the name of his son is in order to establish "Clueless Captain" as the accepted heir.

War on the Korean peninsula may have much to do with the establishment of succession yet the PRC does not apparently believe that succession is a problem. Its articles tend to point to Kim's continuing need for food and fuel to survive the Winter. This may be an indication that they have not been able to reestablish their spy network that the North took down a few years ago. Other than "inviting" Kim to Beijing to talk, they may not know any more about events in North Korea than anyone else.

Of the two major trouble spots, Korea and Iran, Korea is the more important. Removing a major source of nuclear know how from the Iranians will also set them back some years before they get a nuclear device to go "boom". That outcome is one that will please a lot of people. Perhaps we should remind the PRC that not having to deal with a nuclear armed Iran keeps the oil flowing from the Persian Gulf. Perhaps then we wouldn't see articles like the second one. The PRC is already short of coal for electricity and Winter is just starting. We should remind them that they could also be short of oil.