

The PRC's Position on Korea

The People's Daily has published two articles in the last twelve hours that present an accurate picture of its position on the Korean Peninsula. The latest one is a bit of a diatribe against South Korea, and by extension Japan and the United States, for South Korea's conduct of the artillery exercise on 19 Dec. (<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/7238754.html>).

North Korea's reaction to the South's military drill Monday let the world see its calmness and restraint. The North's international image is being quietly altered, whereas the South is labeled by some observers as threatening the status quo.

There are also voices deriding North Korea's timidity in the face of the South's hard-line stance. North Korea should not heed them. No matter what motive it had, North Korea didn't retaliate Monday, which preserved the fragile peace on the peninsula.

Consequently, North Korea deserves the applause of the region for its diplomatic response. Those who laugh at North Korea's "cowardice" are actually onlookers seeking to extract their own interests from the chaos on the peninsula.

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Like a pile of unfinished homework, the peninsula issue has piled up for six decades. South Korea, Japan and the US are continuing to add to the teetering tower, hoping that one day North Korea's collapse will eliminate all this work in one swoop.

This mentality was laid at the feet of Wall Street businessmen as the reason for the financial crisis, as they piled up bad debts.

There is no shortcut to perpetual peace on the Korean Peninsula. In order to solve the issue, many things need to be done to enhance North Korea's sense of security, including promoting the compatibility between its regime and the surrounding environment and narrowing its economic gap with neighbors.

All of Northeast Asia should act in political sincerity and economic generosity to help create workable conditions for North Korea to open up.

Then there is this from this morning. (<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/7238108.html>).

Both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) are close neighbour of China, and their people are brothers of the Chinese people. China definitely does not want to see any war erupt between them and, otherwise, the external environment for China's economic development will deteriorate due to war turmoil on the Korean peninsula.

So, for the sake of enabling our Korean brothers to live in peace and amity and for the sake of China's own security interest, we have to say what's on our mind to the DPRK and ROK brothers. Both countries should cherish peace and exert their utmost to avoid a possible national tragedy and take into consideration the external environment of peaceful construction in China and other neighbouring

countries.

People from DPRK and ROK are kinsmen of the same race, and they belong to the same big Korean family, who are related closely to each other by flesh and blood. The Korean Peninsula was divided by a great power game after the surrender of Japanese intruders at the end of World War II in 1945. Therefore, people on the Peninsula desire the reunification of Korea, and it is just and legitimate.

Against this historical background, however, the evolution of this cause could not be pressed ahead with the use of force. This not only failed to alter the map of the Peninsula but brought calamity to our country unfortunately.

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The Korean and Chinese people like the back of the hand palm are connected. For this reason, we advise Brothers: The war is not a game, and the cost of war is beyond all imaginations and beyond the affordation of any parties. Hence, the two countries should treat each other with sober-mindedness and in a spirit of brotherhood so as to resolve differences via consultations. China is ready to join other nations worldwide in doing its best for the fraternal unity and the eradication of disputes between DPRK and ROK.

Please read both articles for more important information.

Analysis. The second article is written by Professor Shen Dingli, Director of the Center for American Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai. It is written like a parent chastising two brothers for fighting. The PRC obviously believes it is the dominant power in the area and that all other nations should perform kowtow to it. Only a little bit of condescension here.

The first article makes it plain that at the moment, the PRC is not ready to stop supporting North Korea. It boldly suggests that put up the economic support to keep the North going. There is also a gratuitous hit on Wall Street for the financial crisis.

There is indeed no shortcut to peace on the Korean Peninsula as long as North Korea continues to exist much less in its present form. I doubt that the PRC would think much of the economic prospects of a unified Korea ruled from Pyongyang. The people of South Korea would think a whole lot less of becoming slaves to the Kim family.

Yet in the North the opposite is true. The North Koreans are well aware of the economic prosperity of the South and would really like to join in eating regularly through the winter. They would also appreciate being able to stay a few degrees above freezing in a lot of places. Modern health care would be a good thing too. The North would really like to be rid of the Kim family.

As much as these two articles try to bend South Korea to the PRC's position that Kim should be humored in the spirit of brotherly love and peace on the peninsula, that will not happen under the Lee government. Too much of South Korea has had enough of the games Kim plays to try and get what he wants for free. Not for at least the next two years and perhaps not after that if Lee is reelected.

A new, higher state of alert is becoming the norm on the Korean Peninsula. That makes it faster to go to war. Nor are we out of this crisis yet. Chosun Ilbo and Joongang Ilbo are both reporting that the South Korean have lit up the Christmas Tree tower that is easily visible from the North across the Imjin River.

The North has specifically said they would shoot at it. We will see.

The question I can't answer at the moment is how far will Kim's intransigence go this time? A lot of that, I suspect, depends upon the depth and rapidity of the acceptance of Kim Jong Un as the heir. If that process of the transfer of power continues to have problems, we can pretty much count on more incidents. The same is true if the food situation is as bad as a lot of people, myself included, believe it is. This may well be why the PRC is strongly suggesting that all the nations of Northwest Asia get together and help North Korea.

I believe it behooves us to continue to make the PRC Kim's only source of aid. Perhaps at some point the PRC will tire of this role and be willing to assist in a change of government in Pyongyang. It must measure the current cost of financing Kim against the costs and profits of a change of regime. In the meantime, we must be prepared for Kim to lash out at all who oppose him.