

FROM ONE COLD WAR TO ANOTHER – THE ROLE OF KOREA

Lee Myung-bak, Cheonan, and the New Cold War

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31 October 2011

Outline

- ▣ Framework – Global and regional
- ▣ Lee Myung-bak's *nordpolitik*
- ▣ To the brink of war
- ▣ Back from the brink
- ▣ The New Cold War

Global Framework

- ▣ Korean peninsula is a link between (1st) Cold War and New Cold War
- ▣ 1950 – Korean War kickstarted Cold War
 - Impetus for remilitarisation of US
- ▣ Cold War reaction to period of instability
 - Major powers strengthen-
 - ▣ Military
 - ▣ Alliances
- ▣ To protect/extend zone of control

Cold War>>> New Cold War

- ▣ Collapse of Soviet Union >>end of Cold War
- ▣ Period of unchallenged US hegemony
- ▣ 'Peace dividend' limited
- ▣ US
 - Soon increased military expenditure
 - Sought to extend zone of control
 - ▣ Destruction of Yugoslavia
 - ▣ Extension of NATO/(EU) to east
 - ▣ Invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya...

Reaction by China, Russia

- ▣ Creation/Reactivation of alliances
- ▣ Increased military expenditure
- ▣ Firmer line against US
 - Veto of Syria motion in UNSC
- ▣ Korean peninsula important component

Differences between CW and NCW

- ▣ Rise of China
- ▣ Loss of coherent ideologies
 - No longer struggle between capitalism and socialism

Regional framework - Six Party Talks

- Bring together the main protagonists
- China (host), US, ROK, DPRK, Russia, Japan
- Examine positions and policies

Japan

- Can be discounted
- Dean Acheson: Britain has lost an empire, not yet found a role
 - Even more apposite for Japan
- Not grown out of its client relationship with its conqueror
- Scarcely plays an independent role commensurate with economic power
- Two aspects to foreign policy

Japanese foreign policy

- ▣ Lurching down road of confrontation with China
- ▣ Remilitarisation – becoming a ‘normal state’
- ▣ ‘North Korean threat’ plays important role
- ▣ In terms of Korean peninsula plays role of spoiler
 - Does not want peace
 - Does not want unified Korea

China and Russia

- ▣ Both want stability on Korean peninsula
 - Fear war and tension
- ▣ Neither want to give US excuse, pretext for conflict during
 - Russian resurgence
 - Chinese 'peaceful' rise
- ▣ South Korea is much more important economically
- ▣ But, differences between them

Differences between China and Russia

- ▣ Locus of conflict
 - China – close to capital, northern part of industrial heartland
 - ▣ Already substantial Korean population in Dongbei
 - ▣ Fear of irredentism?
 - Russia – far from power heartland
- ▣ Korea is more important to China than Russia
- ▣ China has more leverage over both Koreas

DPRK

- ▣ Small, weak, vulnerable
- ▣ Seeks survival rather than aggrandisement
- ▣ Primary objective is peaceful coexistence with US (and Japan)
 - Removal of military threat, lifting of sanctions, freedom to trade and attract FDI
- ▣ Friendly relations with US (and Japan) to counterbalance China
- ▣ Good relations with ROK
- ▣ No pretext/opportunity for invasion
 - No 'provocations'
 - No display of weakness

United States

- ▣ Very difficult to analyse foreign policy
 - Privileges the domestic, especially as elections approach
 - Large, invulnerable, lots of options and challenges
 - ▣ Dissensions with elite
 - ▣ Chinoy, Mike. *Meltdown: The inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*. St. Martin's Press 2008.
 - Policy towards Korea?

US Korean policy

▣ Emotion

- First war US did not win
- 60 years of hostile propaganda
 - ▣ Racism – good niggers and bad niggers

▣ Global strategy

- DPRK nuclear weapons red herring
- Fear of setting 'bad example'
 - ▣ Empires do not willingly concede equality (peaceful coexistence) to small countries
- Looks at DPRK and sees China

China factor in US Korean policy

- ▣ US seeks to contain China partly through alliances
 - India, Australia....
- ▣ Japan and ROK are the core
 - US troops
 - Economic might
 - Military might
 - ▣ Military expenditure: Japan + ROK > China
- ▣ DPRK which can be portrayed as a threat is essential glue

Republic of Korea

- ▣ US client state
 - Clients can capture hegemon's policy
- ▣ Created (militarily and economically) by US
- ▣ US still has wartime command over ROK military (OPCON)
 - For technical reasons (interoperability, logistics, intelligence) ROK military cannot operate independently of US
 - Cf DRPK – much weaker, but independent
- ▣ Ambivalent attitude towards North
 - Brothers and enemies

Lee Myung-bak's 'nordpolitik'

- ▣ Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun
 - Engagement, 'Sunshine policy'
- ▣ Lee (Feb 2008) hardline policy
- ▣ Ostensibly to produce change in DPRK policy('grand bargain')
- ▣ Reality three assumptions
 - DPRK near to collapse
 - Crisis would precipitate collapse
 - Collapse would give ROK opportunity for invasion/takeover of DPRK

Hardline policy in action

- ▣ Tours to Kumgangsan suspended
 - Important money earner for North, potent symbol of Korean unity
 - Plan to create 'zone of peace' in West Sea dumped
 - ▣ Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Jong Il summit October 2007

West Sea and North Limit Line



Northern Limit Line

- ▣ Unilaterally established by US in 1953 to stop Syngman Rhee reigniting fighting after Armistice
- ▣ Not accepted by DPRK (MDL)
- ▣ No standing in international law
 - Kate, Daniel Ten, and Peter S. Green. "Defending Korea Line Seen Contrary to Law by Kissinger Remains U.S. Policy." *Bloomberg*, 17 December 2010.
 - NLL where majority of N-S clashes take place

Summit declaration 4 October 2007

- ▣ The South and the North designate the common fishery zone in order to prevent accidental clashes in the West Sea. Both sides will hold Defense Ministers' talks in Pyongyang November this year in order to discuss military confidence-building measures, including methods to foster the aforementioned zone into a zone of peace, as well as military assurance measures for various cooperative projects

Zone of Peace

- ▣ The South and the North will establish "**The West Sea Special Zone for Peace and Cooperation**" encompassing Haeju area and its adjoining waters, and actively seek the designation of a common fishery zone and peace zone, construction of special economic zone, and utilization of the Haeju port, direct passage of civilian vessels to Haeju, and joint utilization of the Han River estuary.

Lee BM and NLL

- ▣ Scraps 'Zone of Peace'
- ▣ Reiterates NLL is the border
- ▣ NLL is where both *Cheonan* and *Yeonpyeong* incidents take place

Cheonan

ROKS Cheonan sank 26 March 2010 in the West Sea, claiming 46 lives while massive US/ROK military exercises were taking place in the vicinity



Sinking and its context

- ▣ Cause uncertain and contested
- ▣ Important to understand it within its context
- ▣ Two aspects now – others later
 - Military exercises
 - Location

US/ROK Military exercises



ROK corvettes on patrol



Anti-submarine warfare



Amphibious invasion exercises



Amphibious invasion exercises



Amphibious invasion exercises



Location – Northern Limit Line



Cheonan
sinking

The investigation (s)

- ▣ ROK military
- ▣ Russian navy
- ▣ Innumerable dissections
 - National Defence Commission (DPRK)
 - Korean scientists in North America
 - Civil groups in ROK
 - Cyberworld.....

ROK military

- ▣ Officially Civilian-Military Joint Investigation Group (JIG)
- ▣ Token civilians
 - One (Shin Sang-cheol) expelled for dissent
- ▣ Also billed as 'international' / 'multinational'
 - US, Australia, UK, Sweden
 - China and Russia not invited
 - DPRK requests refused

'smoking gun' at last moment

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Serial Number of Torpedo Traced to N.Korea

Investigators have found at the 11th hour found a desperately needed smoking gun linking North Korea to the sinking of the Navy corvette Cheonan, a government official claimed Tuesday. Investigators apparently discovered a propeller from the torpedo that likely sank the ship in relatively good condition in waters where it sank and the serial number handwritten on it is North Korean.

Interim report



Embargo



Investigation Result on the Sinking of ROKS "Cheonan"

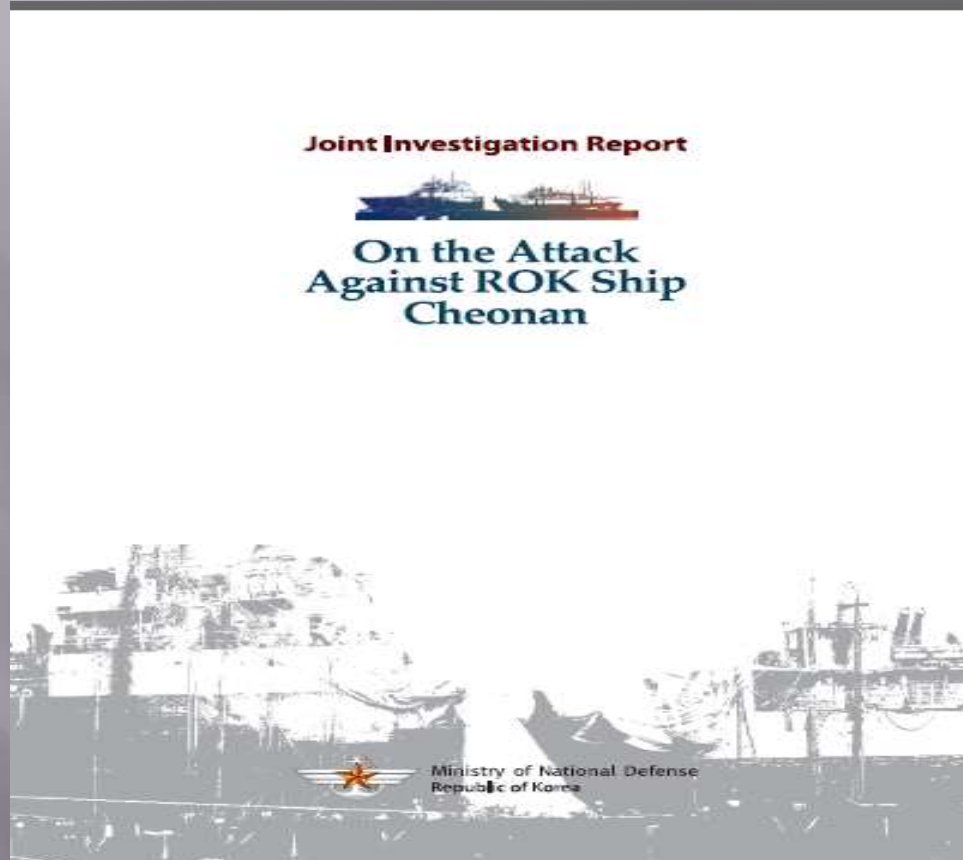
THU, 20 MAY, 2010

The Joint Civilian-Military
Investigation Group

Verdict

○ Based on all such relevant facts and classified analysis, we have reached the clear conclusion that ROKS "Cheonan" was sunk as the result of an external underwater explosion caused by a torpedo made in North Korea. The evidence points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that the torpedo was fired by a North Korean submarine. There is no other plausible explanation.

Final report - September



Joint Investigation Report: On the Attack Against ROK Ship Cheonan. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2010.
<<http://www.nautilus.org/publications/essays/napsnet/sr/Cheonan.pdf>>

Russian investigation

- ▣ Not invited to original investigation
 - Subsequently to review the evidence compiled by ROK military

The invitation of Russian and Chinese experts into the team of foreign investigators should have been done from the outset. It was strange to see the investigation team composed only of ROK's allies (US, Australia, Canada, UK and neutral Sweden). This can only be explained by the sensitivity of joint ROK-US military and naval exercises which were going on in the area where Cheonan sank.

Now, two months after the incident, inviting Russian experts does not make much sense because they will get access only to the second-hand evidence and convenient answers rather than the crime scene. I doubt that they will be allowed to inspect the incident site and examine the seabed as thoroughly as it was done by their predecessors

Petrov, Leonid. "Interview." *Radio Free Asia*, 28 May 2010.

- Russia has big debt with ROK
 - ▣ Lee Myung-bak thought it a safe way to add credibility

Russian naval team of torpedo experts



A group of Russian Navy experts visited the Republic of Korea from May 30 to June 7, 2010, reviewed the ROK sponsored Joint Investigation Group (JIG) report and collected material necessary for analysis and experiments

Russians cagey

- ▣ Frequent reports in South Korean press that Russian investigation 'inconclusive'

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Russian Investigators' Report on Cheonan Sinking 'Inconclusive'

Russian investigators submitted their final report on the sinking of the South Korean Navy corvette Cheonan to the National Security Council, an agency under presidential supervision, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Saturday. The news agency did not say what their conclusion was.

Russian report not published

- ▣ Copies to China and US, but not to either Korea
- ▣ Why was it not published?
- ▣ Was it saying something more than 'not proven'?

Donald Gregg

- ▣ Former CIA operative, Bush Sr ambassador to ROK, Chairman of the Korea Society:
 - South Korea has not officially referred to the Russian conclusions. When I asked a well-placed Russian friend why the report has not been made public, he replied, “Because it would do much political damage to President Lee Myung-bak and would embarrass President Obama.”

Gregg, Donald P. "Testing North Korean Waters." *International Herald Tribune*, 31 August 2010.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/01/opinion/01iht-edgregg.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print

What did the Russians conclude?

- ▣ Though not officially published, the conclusions were leaked to the South Korean newspaper Hankyoreh

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Russia's Cheonan investigation suspects that the sinking Cheonan ship was caused by a mine in water

Russia's Cheonan investigation findings contrast with S.Korea's report
S.Korea's joint civilian-military investigation team concluded the sinking was caused by a torpedo attack by N.Korea

The Hankyoreh

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the accident occurred when "the vessel's propeller happened to get caught in a net as it was sailing through shallow waters near the coast, and as the vessel was trying to extricate itself to deep waters, its lower part struck a [mine] antenna and set off the triggering device."

"Russia's Cheonan investigation suspects that the sinking Cheonan ship was caused by a mine in water." *Hankyoreh*, 28 July 2010.
http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/432232.html

Cheonan sinking an accident

- ▣ Accident rather than NK attack
- ▣ Mine was South Korean

....there is a risk of mines in the area where damage to the vessel occurred....," the Russian team said.

Analysts are interpreting this as referring to the large-scale placement of depth charges by the South Korean government in the 1970s to prevent a North Korean landing on Baengnyeong Island.

Another possibility raised by the Russian investigation team was that the explosion occurred from of the **South Korean military's own torpedoes.**

"Complex combination of factors" responsible for Cheonan sinking, Russian investigation concludes
". *Hankyoreh*, 28 July 2010.

<http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/ISSUE/75/432233.html>

And the smoking gun?

- ▣ The torpedo part that ROK presented seems to be an electronic torpedo with a radius of 533mm. However, **we do not conclude that this particular torpedo was launched to and impacted on the Cheonan ship.**

"Russian Navy Expert Team's analysis on the Cheonan incident." *Hankyoreh*, 29 July 2010.

<http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/ENGISSUE/75/432230.html>

- ▣ Probably a mine, possibly a SK torpedo, but not this NK torpedo
- ▣ The only piece of evidence incriminating DPRK discounted by Russian torpedo experts on technical grounds
- ▣ But they went further

Corrosion

- ▣ The Russians confirmed what South Korean critics had long pointed out
- ▣ 'Visual examination of the torpedo part indicates that **the torpedo had been in the water for more than 6 months.**'

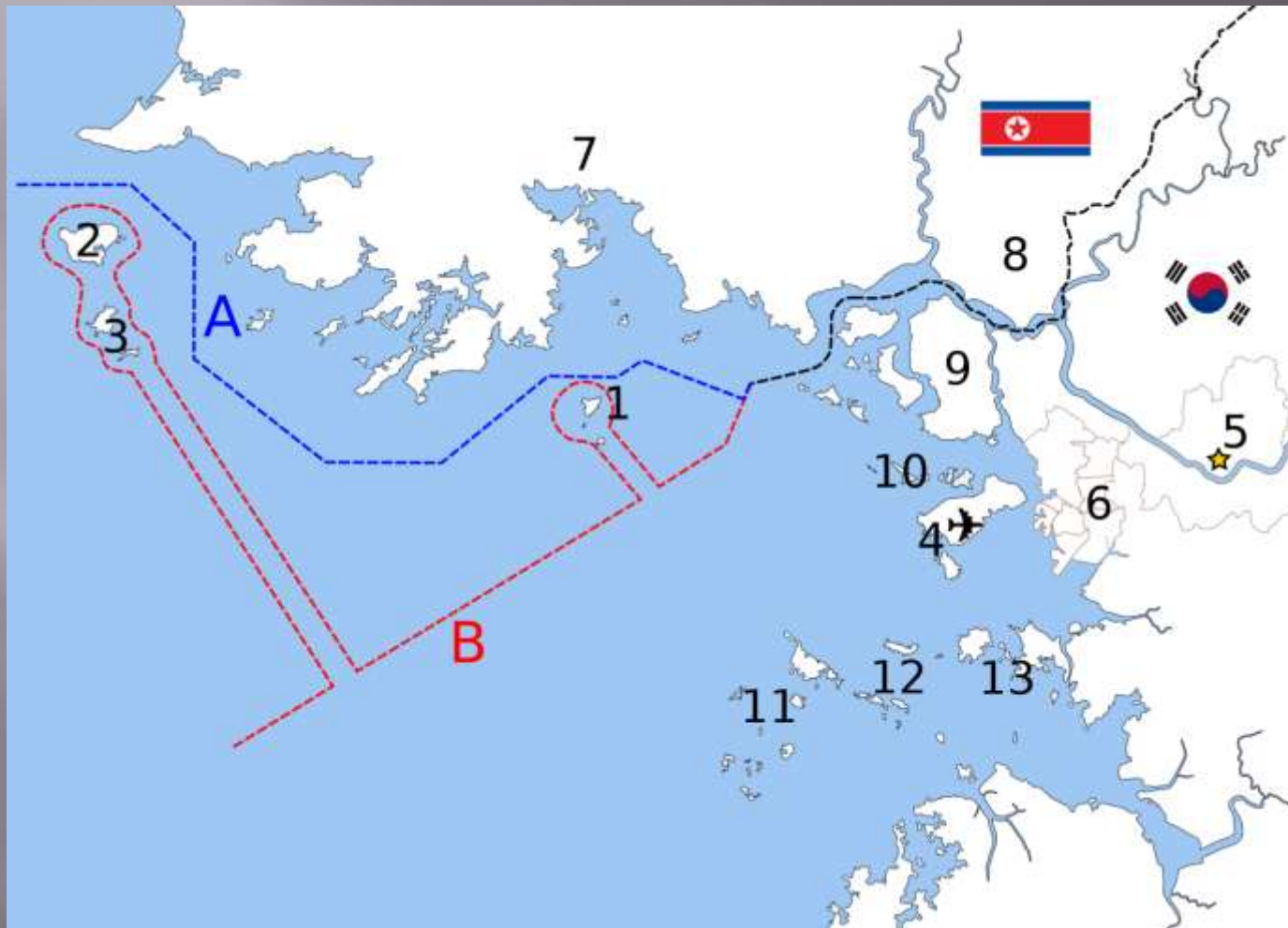
"Russian Navy Expert Team's analysis on the Cheonan incident." *Hankyoreh*, 29 July 2010.

- ▣ But ROK claimed that it had been responsible for sinking on 26 March (ie 2 months)

Implications of corrosion

- ▣ Virtually certain that torpedo remnant was planted in order to incriminate DPRK
 - There is no other plausible explanation
- ▣ Did Lee Myung-bak know and authorise?
 - Almost certainly
- ▣ Did Hillary Clinton know?
 - Probably
 - Russian report did go to US government

Yeonpyeong Incident November 2010



Yeonpyeong

- ▣ ROK scheduled 'live fire exercises' by marines on Yeonpyeong in (contested) sea
- ▣ DPRK warned number of times that it would not tolerate and would retaliate
- ▣ ROK went ahead, DPRK fired killing 2 marines and 2 civilian contractors on military base
- ▣ ROK returned fire, unknown number of casualties
- ▣ Incident boosted anti-DPRK sentiment in South
 - Was it deliberate?
- ▣ Beal, Tim. "Korean Brinkmanship, American Provocation, and the Road to War: The Manufacturing of a Crisis." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, no. 51:1 (20 December 2010).

On the brink of war

- ▣ All of these incidents — in combination with actions and inactions by South Korea, the United States, and other regional powers — arguably moved the peninsula closer to “the brink” at the end of 2010 than it had been for some time.
- Oppenheim, Robert. "Introduction to the Jas Mini-Forum “Regarding North Korea”." *Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 2 (2011).

June 2011 _ ROK marines fire on airliner

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Marines 'Made Trigger-Happy by Inter-Korean Tensions'

South Korean marines mistakenly fired at an Asiana Airlines passenger plane because they were tense due to inter-Korean tension after last year's attacks by North Korea on the Navy corvette Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island, Le Figaro reported on Monday.

The French daily added the marines mistook the passenger jet for a North Korean military plane amid pressure to respond rapidly to attacks.

No one was hurt.



"Marines 'Made Trigger-Happy by Inter-Korean Tensions'." *Chosun Ilbo*, 22 June 2011.

Back from the brink

- ▣ In fact, substantial easing of tension during 2011
- ▣ Countries in turn

DPRK

- ▣ Did not take action over renewed live fire exercises
- ▣ Overtures to US
 - Clinton, Carter, Richardson missions
 - Agreed to MIA and meetings with US
- ▣ Kim's visits to China
- ▣ Kim's visit to Russia

China

- ▣ Welcomed Kim Jong Il, and ministers
- ▣ Relations with DPRK get warmer, those with ROK cooler
 - Great increase in trade, action over SEZ
- ▣ Strong protests over US naval exercises

China confirms mutual defence treaty

GLOBAL
TIMES
PUBLISHING CHINA, DISSEMINATING THE WORLD

Thursday, October 27, 2011

North Korean Treaty still in China's interests

Global Times | July 14, 2011 22:33

By Global Times

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Editor's note:

Monday was the 50th anniversary of China and North Korea concluding the Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (the Treaty) on July 11, 1951. But given its changing relationship with North Korea, should China think again about what the Treaty means? Five Chinese experts shared their insights on the issue.

Han Xiandong (deputy director of the Institute of International Studies at China University of Political Science and Law):

Russia –Medvedev reactivates pipeline proposal

- ▣ At Kim-Medvedev summit August 2011 gas pipeline (and railway) reactivated
- ▣ Lock Korean peninsula into peace
- ▣ Great economic benefit to Russia, both Koreas, and Japan
 - US and ROK right-wing unhappy, but difficult to oppose openly
- ▣ Work on railways, Rason SEZ

Globally

- ▣ Both China and Russia worried about de facto invasion of Libya, threats against Iran and Syria
- ▣ Very unusual double veto of US Syria proposals in UNSC

United States

- ▣ Still unwilling to re-join Six Party Talks, serious negotiations with DPRK
- ▣ Downgraded 'Special envoy for North Korea'
- ▣ Does not want any incidents in run-up to 2012 election
- ▣ Surprised at resilience of Libya

ROK

- ▣ Lee Myung-bak now lame duck president
- ▣ Nordpolitik widely seen as a failure
- ▣ After three and a half years of a hard line with nothing to show for it except worsened inter-Korea relations, Lee Myung-bak is at long last executing a U-turn. Not openly and without fanfare of course; but the signs are clear.
 - Foster-Carter, Aidan. "South Korea Changes Course on the North: Back to the F Word." *East Asia Forum*, 19 October 2011.
 - Relations with China and Russia also suffered

GNP losing support

- ▣ Lost Seoul election on 26 October by wide margin
- ▣ Demographics – young are turning against conservatives
 - Immediately after the election, analysis of exit polls by three major broadcasters according to age group suggested that Park received a flood of votes from those in their 20s, 30s and 40s. His support from these age groups was overwhelming, coming to 69.3% among those in their 20s, 75.8% among those in their 30s and 66.8% among those in their 40s. Na enjoyed the support of 56.5% of voters in their 50s and 69.2% of those in their 60s.
 - Lee, Tae-hee. "Park Won-Soon Pledges Change Following by-Election Victory." *Hankyoreh*, 27 October 2011.

New Cold War

- Although tension has eased the fissures of crisis remain
- ROK after Lee Myung-bak will probably be less confrontational but conservatives/military remain a powerful force
- Lee's Nordpolitik has done much to bring back Cold War alliances
 - These will now remain
 - Korea a subset of wider confrontations

US hegemony faltering

- ▣ Challenged in various quarters (Middle East, 'Arab Spring', Russian resurgence)
- ▣ And especially China's rise

Korea remains the flashpoint

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N.Korean Regime Collapse 'Could Trigger U.S.-China Conflict'

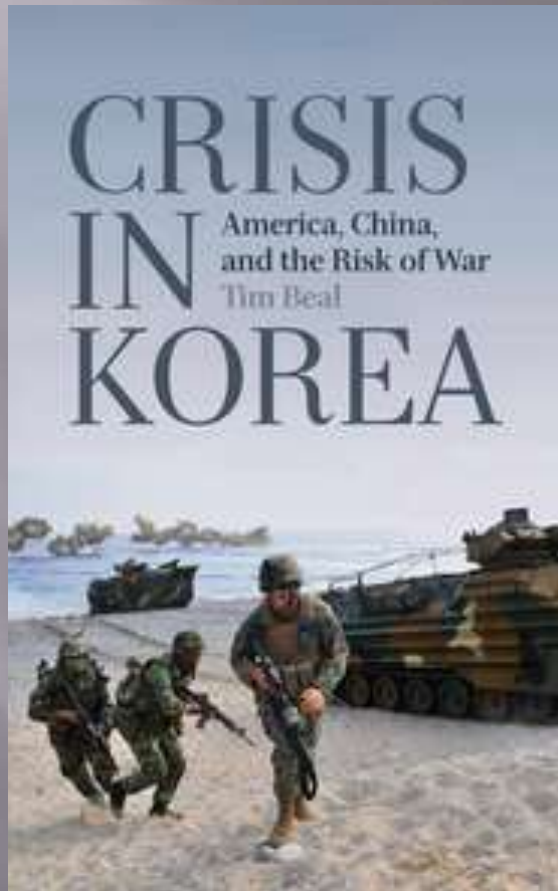
The collapse of the North Korean regime could be a trigger for a military conflict between the U.S. and China, says the California-based RAND Corporation.

The hard-right think tank lists the end of the North Korean regime as one of six factors that could cause a clash between the two superpowers. Another factor is differing views on Taiwan and the South China Sea.

It also forecast an exodus of North Koreans to areas bordering China, not only to escape from armed conflicts but also to search for food. This situation would lead to increased threats from the North's weapons and missiles, leading to a military

"N.Korean Regime Collapse 'Could Trigger U.S.-China Conflict' ". *Chosun Ilbo*, 12 October 2011.

To be continued....



**Pluto Press, London
2011**

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