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Ballooning Evangelism: Psychological  
Warfare and Christianity in the Divided  
Korea\*

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the balloon-and-leaflet campaign, an exercise in psychological warfare once practiced by North and South Korean military forces but recently taken over in the South, by non-government, mainly evangelical Protestant organizations. I consider this privatization of psychological warfare emblematic of both the enduring and changing cold war cultures and power struggles found in the context of the national division that has engendered multifaceted politico-ideological partitions within South Korea and beyond. While other Cold War studies have focused mainly on state actors, by considering privatization, this paper sheds light on the ways in which state power is made invisible in the maneuvers of loyalty politics, while civilian religious powers take up the symbolic struggle to envision a reunified nation-state on the Korean peninsula.

**Keywords:** psychological warfare, balloon campaign, North-South Korean border, evangelicalism, the Cold War

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## Introduction

As typhoon Bolaven approached the Korean peninsula, the dark gray clouds moved quickly from the southwest while TV programs kept updating the storm's location and discussed how to prepare for the potentially strongest typhoon in a decade. In contrast to the focus on public anxiety, Mr. Lee's voice on the phone reflected his fervor, "this kind of wind is unusual and now more than perfect for launching *pungsŏn* (風船, balloons) that I am sure they can reach Pyongyang and possibly further North within an hour." Located in Ganghwa Island on the west coast of South Korea, he was preparing to send balloons across the inter-Korean ceasefire line toward North Korean territory. Each balloon carried a plastic bag of thousands of *ppira* (leaflets) and, combined with selected goods, they each made a package that Suzanne Scholte, of the US-based Defense Forum Foundation,<sup>1</sup> once called "a nuclear missile of truth and hope for North Korean people."<sup>2</sup>

This article investigates the balloon-and-leaflet campaign (hereafter called balloon campaign) as an exercise in the type of psychological warfare once practiced by North and South Korean military forces. These initiatives have recently been taken over by non-government organizations, in particular evangelical groups in South Korea, and are primarily aimed at the North Korean regime with very few instances of such campaigns going from North to South. I consider this privatized psychological warfare emblematic of both the enduring and changing Cold War rituals, secular and sacred, that take place in the context of national division. Namely, state-led psychological warfare and Christian-based balloon campaigns should both be seen as a modern form of spiritual warfare signifying a perpetual state of war even when no armed conflicts occur. As Simon Harrison (1989) observed in a tribal community, Avatip of Papua New Guinea; "War is conceived as above all a ritual relationship between villages, a state of hostility between inimical male cults and spirit beings, and only secondarily between living men" (Harrison 1989: 585). Significant in this

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1 Defense Forum Foundation works mainly for sub-Saharan self-determination and North Korean human rights. Suzanne Scholte was awarded the Seoul Peace Prize in 2008 for her campaigns to improve North Korean and Saharawi refugees' human rights. See <http://www.defenseforum.org/> for more information.

2 Kim, Sŭng-gŭn. "Suzanne Scholte 'Bukŏro ssonŭn namhan ūi haekmisail' (Suzanne Scholte 'South Korean nuclear missile launched toward North Korea')", *Tongnipsinmun*, May 1, 2010.

anthropological insight on war is the ritual processes by which “our” spirits, souls, and friends are defined against those of the enemy or “other,” and moreover, the antagonistic framework that ends to be applied to “our” community. In the case of modern nation-states, the political term “national security” promulgates the creation of entities to which people either submit themselves or contest. By looking at psychological warfare as forms of political and religious ritual, this article historicizes how antagonistic North and South Korean state powers tried to demilitarize, ridicule, and degrade one another. I investigate to what extent psychological war became privatized, mainly by Christian-based organizations, and how transnational networks contribute to remilitarizing the socio-political partitions on the inter-Korean border and within South Korea.

Much of the recent literature on borders has paid attention to the spatial passages of people, ideas, goods, and capital that foster hybrid identities and make such borders much more porous than before (Appadurai 1996, Rosaldo 1993, Ong 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1992).<sup>3</sup> However, nation-states and their alliances are proving resilient in determining the degree and frequency of such movements. Border inspections are more frequent than border crossings for working class people, as Alejandro Lugo (2007) has demonstrated in the context of the US-Mexico border. The term “Fortress Europe” signifies the formation of a supra-national border (Paasi 2001). Capital moves more freely (and unequally) across borders than do people (Sparke 2006). Renowned anti-neoliberalist economist Ha-Joon Chang (2007) argues that a nation-state’s control over markets in underdeveloped or developing countries is necessary to protect the domestic economy from “Bad Samaritans,” namely Big Powers, and supra-national institutions (i.e., IMF, World Bank, and WTO).

Such divergent views on borders, whether physical or symbolic, suggests that we consider the questions that Heon-ik Kwon asked about “the other cold war” in which “the problem of the twentieth century, ... turned out to be as much about the color of human belief and thought as about the physical color of the human body” (Kwon 2010: 37-38). Indeed, the problem is not resolved, but its manifestations have mutated into other power relations. An extremely polarized division colored with prolonged

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3 See Robert R. Alvarez Jr. (1995) for a succinct review on the main trends in the anthropological study of borderlands that have been developed from studies on the Mexican-US border and expanded from geographical to conceptual boundaries. This is crucial in anthropological inquiries on “community, gender, culture, identity, power, and domination” (Alvarez 1995: 450). See also Lamont and Molnár (2002) for a sociological discussion of symbolic boundaries.



Cold War sentiments continues in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Korea. Roland Bleiker (2005) observes “recurring patterns of conflict,” on the Korean peninsula. Bleiker sheds light on the antagonistic identities constructed throughout the modern history of Korea that are so persistent that nearly all diplomatic breakthroughs are followed by a recurrence of extreme conflict. Such threats are omnipresent and inherently entrenched with state propaganda, education, media representations, policy shifts, and “disciplinary technologies”<sup>4</sup> on each side of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in the decades since the devastating Korean War (1950-1953). Bleiker’s insightful suggestion of linking security issues with identity politics leads us to examine the sociocultural dimensions of the border, a social field in which multiple actors including state powers, civil societies, and individuals interact, negotiate, and co-exist with one another.

Notably, the term “security” must not be conceptualized as a normative condition against “abnormal” conflicts. Harrison argues that war is not an outcome of a failure of peaceful reciprocity between groups, but can be seen as a normative condition of different socialities. That said, the recurring conflicts on the peninsula may be less a result of failing security measures or policies, and more a part of the political ritual processes by which domestic populations can be subjectified to “homogeneous” moral discourses, politico-ideological loyalty, and unconscious antagonistic sentiment against an “enemy”. Psychological warfare, in this light, serves as a window through which we can better understand what Giorgio Agamben theorizes as “a state of emergency” becoming normalized in everyday politics and life on the Korean peninsula, and further, how Christianity appears to be both instrumental and fundamental in rationalizing the seemingly irreconcilable bifurcated modernization between North and South Korea, and serves to reproduce and de-secularize the anticommunist psywar contents and features.

Private organizations leading the recent balloon campaigns include mainly North Korean migrants’ organizations, South Korean evangelical Protestants and conservatives, and US-based organizations, as well as groups from other Christian denominations. The aims of these groups are by no means monolithic, with partners meeting and parting according to their varying interests in North Korean human rights and freedom in principle, and anything anti-North Korea in practice. For them, the balloon campaigns are a crusade and a sacred ritual that is more effective than the previous military-led campaign. These organizations’ balloon campaigns, I argue, should

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4 Disciplinary technologies refer to techniques that aim to produce a “docile [body] that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 1977: 136)

be seen as both a trans-border practice with a militant millenarian aspiration, and a process of ideological boundary making to be internalized by the people on each side.

This paper is based on interview data with North Korean migrants, South Korean government officers, and activists and specialists during the summer of 2012, and supplements my previous ethnographic research on the relationship between North Korean migration and conversion to Christianity. Acknowledging that this is only a preliminary discussion, I compose the main body of this paper in two parts: first a historical narrative of psychological warfare in the context of the inter-Korean border, i.e., national division. With reference to archival research and resources acquired online and offline, this section contextualizes changing geopolitical landscapes in conjunction with the analysis of some examples of leaflets. The second part elaborates the processes and complex discourses of the privatized balloon-and-leaflet campaign. Lastly, the multilayered partitions that are ideologically and militarily refortified rather than demilitarized in the Korean peninsula are discussed.

## National Division and Religion

This paper draws attention away from North-South Korean confrontations to the resilience and dynamics of “the cultural Cold War” (Saunders 2000), a war not only of state agencies (e.g., the Army forces, intelligence agencies, etc.), but also of private organizations such as non-government organizations with transnational connections. The inter-Korean territorial partition was quintessential to the subsequent and devastating war and recurring conflicts that substantial historical literature has taken into account (e.g., Cumings 1981, 1981b, 2010). This section serves to historicize the national division through the lens of religion.<sup>5</sup>

Referring to intellectual accounts and Korean popular sentiment on the Korean territorial partition, I want to highlight two aspects. First, it is crucial to understand that the division of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was neither a penalty, in the way Germany had to pay for the losses of World War II, nor was it a consequence of an existing domestic

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5 The Cold War existed in the former Soviet-US context and still, in the Korean context, is construed with a series of contests over legitimacy; a running for “symbolic victories” (Preston 2012: xii). Soviet socialism and American Protestantism alike have established moral, political, and emotional foundations. Similarly, recent US wars on terrorism and a series of suicide bombings, elsewhere, after 9/11 are conspicuously represented in religious vocabularies and implications.

political-religious cleavage. The 38th parallel that separated the Korean peninsula as soon as it was liberated from the 35-year Japanese colonial annexation (1910-1945) by the Allies, is exclusively a project and product of the newly emerging Big Powers, namely the United States and the Soviet Union. The US military planners took only thirty or so minutes to demarcate the Soviet-controlled area in the northern part from the US forces in the south. This initiative was followed by catastrophes such as the successive establishment of a sole government in the South and then in the North that was followed by the devastating Korean War (1950-1953), and eventually the continuing Cold War bipolarization between the two Koreas. Having said that, my second concern is that the current North-South differences and cultural and political distinctions should not be understood as fixed and unchanging, but rather as being made through interactions with external and internal power dynamics.

The North Korean ruling philosophy, Juche or Jucheism, has been investigated in various fields of study. In simple terms, the Juche Ideology has been developed or distorted from what is officially claimed by the North to be “our way of socialism”, which is deeply rooted in Marx-Leninism, with particular emphasis on economic self-subsistence, self-reliance in defense, and political self-independence. The “self” here differs from western notions of individual self, and is rather a collective self, a being inseparable from the national (cf. Ryang 2012). Now, a growing number of scholars highlight how this atheistic philosophy has been and is transforming to a “national religion,” called *Kimilsungism*, in which it is paramount to worship Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea, as an eternal Father, and, to a lesser degree, his son, Kim Jong Il, whose power descended to his youngest son Kim Jong Un. Scholarly understandings of this society, though still limited, vary.

For example, historian Haruki Wada’s (2002) insightful concepts of “a partisan state” and a family state explain the ways in which Kim (with his anti-Japanese background) and his fellow comrades came to control the essence of power and moral hierarchy through the political system in the North (cf. Kwon and Chung 2012: 15-26). Sonia Ryang (2012), however, disagrees with equating a Confucian father figure with the eternal Father Kim Il Sung, and so questions the definition of a family state. Ryang argues that a core virtue in the relationship between Kim and the people is not filial piety or familial duty, but love, similar to Christian love. Meanwhile, Heonik Kwon and Byung-Ho Chung (2012) draw on Clifford Geertz’s concept of theater state and deliberately shed light on North Korean cultural projects and products to discuss how North Korean charismatic leadership continues to be resilient across generations. Many other scholarly discussions reveal that the North Korean

political system, power structure, social formations, and the like are amalgamative and constructive, with such constructions not exclusively made without interaction, imagined or real, with the “other”.

North Korean propaganda has long proclaimed that “imperialist U.S.” and its “puppet,” the South Korean regime are its national foes. For the United States, North Korea has been infamously labeled by former president, George W. Bush, as being part of the “axis of evil.” Whereas the annual US-ROK (South Korea) joint military exercise in the inter-Korean border area tries to demonstrate “superior” strength over the North, Christianity is considered by North Korea to be the imperialist tool of an invader poisoning North Korean minds and national sovereignty. In light of anti-North Korean collaborations between the United States and South Korea on both governmental and civil levels, the joint military exercises and church networks are as remarkable as the politico-economic reliance or cooperation. But there is more to contextualize the ways by which Christianity came to play the role of “the bulwark of anti-communism” over the course of its explosive growth after the Korean War up to the 1980s in the South.

Before the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was demarcated, as Kai Yin Allison Haga (2012) illuminates, it was northern Korea where Christianity grew rapidly and its influences and reputations were more firmly established than in the southern region throughout the Japanese colonial era (1910-1945). While Seoul was taken over as a logistical base for imperial Japan, Pyongyang became reputed among American missionaries as “the Jerusalem of Asia.” More complicated, though not unusual in the colonial era, were the divergent forms of nationalisms that contributed to national liberation. Indeed, Christianity and Communism were likely intermingled with the emergence of new nationalist leadership. To make a long story short, it is worthwhile to cite Haga’s historical account:

Following the surrender of Japan, the People’s Republic was declared on September 6, 1945, under the leadership of Yŏ Un-hyŏng in the South and Cho Man-sik in the North. While the leftists had a dominant position in the South, the rightists commanded a large following in the North, precisely the opposite of the ideologies of the northern and southern occupiers. In the North, supported by Soviet troops, Kim Il-sung succeeded in seizing power and purging the rightists; in the South, the rightists rose to power with the blessings of the Americans (Haga 2012: 90).

The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel not only divided the Korean peninsula regardless of local leaders’ and people’s preparation for establishing an independent modern nation-state, but also forcefully de/re-territorialized and heightened the tensions between differing

aspirations. A series of chaotic events such as the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Cheju Massacre, the Yōsu-Sunchōn Rebellion in 1948 south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the 1945 Shinūiju incident, and the 1950 Shinchōn Massacre in the North, to name a few, killed tens of thousands of civilians and made evident that internal persecution on each side intimately intersected with Christian-Communist conflicts backed by the American and the Soviet forces respectively. Many Christian survivors fled to the South, led violent persecutions of the leftists, and subsequently cemented anticommunist sentiments into the fabric of mainstream Protestant Churches in the South.

The historical overview provided thus far does not intend to reduce the present topic of psychological warfare to that of national division itself, but rather to shed light on the processes by which the Cold War was abruptly territorialized, both on Korean soil as well as its socio-political landscapes. As Talal Asad (2003) asserts, we should avoid essentializing a religion as a fixed and timeless entity, but instead consider its particular characteristic as construed through interactions with its divine power, other (semi-) belief systems, and events in particular historical junctures. Note that both Christianity and Communism are relatively new to Korean culture, but the former became the most influential religion in the South, while the latter has been and is evolving as a sole governing power in the northern part of the peninsula and has adopted the form of a religion.

## Psychological Warfare across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

The inter-Korean border is a ceasefire line constituted by a 2-kilometer wide buffer zone on both the northern and southern sides (4 kilometers in total), called the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), it signifies that both countries are still technically at war.<sup>6</sup> The former US President Bill Clinton called this area “the scariest on earth,” where a little spark could burn the entire territory.<sup>7</sup> North and South Korean military forces are deployed outside of the DMZ, making the area untouched for decades with the exception of countless underground landmines. The only things present in the buffer zone for decades were sounds, words, photos, and radio waves. The noises,

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6 For more informative and historical analyses on the DMZ demarcating processes during the Korean War, see Bruce Cumings' *The Korean War: A History* (2010: 31-35), and Duck Soon Im (1972).

7 A phrase from the film JSA (Jointed Security Area), a Korean blockbuster based on a fictional story about the friendship between North and South Korean border guards.

blasted through loud speakers on the hills toward the other side as well as leaflets released from balloons and the scattered broadcasting dishes and towers have been the media through which both military forces have competitively exchanged psychological warfare.

Psychological warfare is, in principle, largely acknowledged and practiced as “a war of mind,” “an important force protector/combat multiplier and a non-lethal weapons system,” and thus a humane means to win a war, in an account of Ed Rouse, the retired Major running a website called the Psywarrior ([www.psywarrior.com](http://www.psywarrior.com)). It uses propaganda that intends “to demoralize the enemy, to break his will to fight or resist, and sometimes to render him favourably disposed to one’s position.”<sup>8</sup> Psywar is often utilized to maximize the efficiency of a literal war; in the context of North and South Korea the war of mind was certainly aimed at officers and men of the armed forces more than at civilians on the “enemy’s side,”<sup>9</sup> as civilians who listened to a radio program from the other side were, for example, imprisoned in their respective countries.

The psychological warfare of the North and South Korean military forces was seen as “printed warfare” in which various images and words were added to accelerate the individual receivers’ radical imagination and transformation, which was constituted by territorial movement and ideological conversion. Material goods were often sent together with the leaflets to the North. Radio sets wrapped in polystyrene were one of the most preferred items to North Koreans wanted to pick up; other symbolic commodities included underwear, socks, office goods, food resources, sanitary napkins, etc.

There was also a competition of voices between two major broadcasting companies: the South Korean government-run Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), and Far East Broadcasting Corporation, a civilian evangelical Protestant broadcasting company, aired to the North, as did North Korea to the South. However, both states’ had the ability to prevent people from receiving short waves or any external signals. All radio sets imported into the North were manipulated by the police before being handed out to the users and the channels were also set to show only official pro-

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8 *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “psychological warfare,” accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/481682/psychological-warfare>.

9 Michael Szonyi elaborates the state-led psychological warfare that existed between China and Taiwan in the 1960s~70s with a focus on the history of Jinmen, an island situated between the two states (i.e., Szonyi 2008: 92-99). In comparative perspective, it is surprising to find from his description similarities between both Korean and Chinese borders where the psywar techniques might have been shared and developed among allies.

grams. One North Korean migrant said “it was as if his healthy tooth was forcibly taken away” in describing an acquaintance who saw North Korean secret agents first remove the radio from his new Japanese car as soon as it was unloaded from a ship.

Vocal propaganda broadcasting was more competitively exchanged through loudspeakers that were mounted to face each other on each side of the border. Female voices were predominant on both sides, and the volume was increased at night when only a limited number of guards were awake. A North Korean female announcer’s “revolutionary” voice reported news about their “Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung” or “Kim Jong Il,” other women with clear soprano voices sang ballad style songs, and men and women’s choirs’ militant and revolutionary songs filled the night, time, and space of the border, as did their southern counterparts.<sup>10</sup>

## Historicizing Propaganda Leaflets

Among the many forms of psywar operations, this article pays particular attention to leaflet propaganda in order to shed light on the implications of its recent privatization in South Korea. The leaflet, known as the “soundless bullet, paper bomb,” is indeed representative of psywar operations and is believed by South Korean Army to be most effective. More significantly, because it is so hard to prevent leaflets from crossing the border, most South and North Koreans in their forties and older, have anecdotal stories related to propaganda leaflets.

When finding North Korean leaflets by accident on the street or forests, South Korean civilians were required to report them to a police station or military base. School children who collected a certain number of leaflets were rewarded by the police. If a person kept a North Korean leaflet for a certain period of time, he or she was suspected and likely to be accused of being contaminated by a disturbing idea and a threat to national unity. Even touching a suspected North Korean leaflet was, itself conceived of as being the equivalent of coming into contact with a viral infection. Despite the promised rewards, one of my South Korean interlocutors recalled how scared she was to even see a suspicious leaflet when she was young, and she never tried to find out whether the statements on the leaflet were true or not.

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10 This description of North Korean loudspeaker broadcasting is based on the author’s own experience. As a native researcher, I served in an artillery unit on the northwest front line of South Korea.

These inter-Korean propaganda competitions originated during the Korean War when US forces and their allies spread about 2.5 billion leaflets in the areas occupied by or sheltering North Korean and Chinese forces. US General MacArthur commanded that they “bury the enemy in leaflets.” Respectively, North Korean forces spread about 30 million leaflets. A historical study estimates that the quantity of the UN leaflets, circa 2.5 billion, was enough to cover the entire peninsula in a layer 35 leaflets deep (Yi 2012). It can thus be argued that the UN leaflet-psywar exhibited capitalist characteristics: namely, not only overproducing and but also over consuming materials to demonstrate “superiority” over the other (cf. Yi 2012).

As the legendary Chinese intellectual Sun Tzū (孫子) stressed in *The Art of War*, it is crucial to “know the enemy and yourself (知彼知己)” in order to maximize the expected result of operating a war; the same rule may be equally relevant to the psychological stratagem. Military leaflets tend to represent what “our” side considers to be at stake at a particular stage of a war. The following are selected examples that show the historical trend of the leaflets<sup>11</sup>:



Figure 1 “Comrade! I stupidly sacrificed my life for commie leader Kim Il Sung. Do you want to die like me?” (UN during the war)



Figure 2 “Safe Conduct Pass”(UN during the war)

11 The DMZ museum that recently opened in Gosŏng, near the DMZ in Gangwon province, has an exhibition of various leaflets from both North and South Korea since the Korean War.





Figure 3 “Rewards and Benefits you receive upon your heroic defection to the South!” and “If you need me, cut along the dotted line.”(S.Korea in 1980s)



Figure 4 “Long live General Kim Jong II!” (N. Korea in 1990s) Note: the model is a famous South Korean actress whose image was used without consent.

The UN leaflets (Figures 1 and 2) reflect conventional psywar strategy patterns: disturbing loyalty and promising safety to enemy soldiers. Among the Korean historical literature that documents and analyzes the propaganda (e.g. Y. G. Lee 2006, 2010, I. H. Yi 2012) is the work by former colonel and current professor at Korea National Defense University, Y. G. Lee, who contributes to understanding types and patterns of various psywar operations on both sides during the war, and developing the subject in the study of military art. A humanistic studies approach to the subject, however, provides a different perspective. I. H. Lee’s study about the UN-led psywar, in particular the leaflet propaganda, reveals that the anticommunist sentiment and bias against North Korea that persist in current South Korean society were initially prefigured in the visual forms of the UN propaganda during the war. Despite the stark differences in the two studies, they are both useful to further examine a particular trend of military leaflets in comparison with the privatized leaflet campaigns in South Korea.

First, the military psywar operations directly aimed at the enemy were relatively unassociated with religious messages, like for example, Christian “superiority” over

Communism. Accordingly, the preceding studies seem to neglect the position and role of religion in the broader scope of psywar operations. However, a history of Korean Christianity demonstrates that American missionaries and domestic church leaders played a pivotal role in disseminating anticommunist ideas to their men in uniform, and to communist POWs as well. Further they took care of orphans, refugees and others in need with relief goods sent from American churches. Kai Yin Allison Haga (2012) documents that American missionaries who were forced to leave for Japan or the United States returned to serve as local interpreters and chaplains among the troops and in POWs camps, to support Korean churches, and to distribute aid to those who needed it. The state-church separation was preferred in principle by the US Army, but in practice American churches made full-fledged efforts to provide enough financial, material, and symbolic resources to support their missionaries in Korea. The presence of American missionaries in the Korean battle zone was conceived as being very significant for “the future of the work in Korea” and “crucial to the development of the US-Korean relationship” (Haga 2012: 97). It may be right to say that during the Korean War, Christianity cemented its influence and reputation as a modern spirituality and social institution, building “the anticommunist bulwark” among the people in South Korean socio-political and emotional landscapes. It is important to note that military psywar materials rarely claimed Christianity as a superior morality and spirituality over Communism. Instead, as we can observe in the later leaflet examples, secular images and messages were predominant in the military materials.

Leaflets such as the one shown in Figure 3, made in a South Korean psywar unit, represent the ways in which sexuality and material prosperity appear to be major themes aimed at North Korean army forces. The underlying assumption behind this kind of male- and material-centered image was that North Korean soldiers and people were denied basic desires under the Communist regime. In a similar vein, Figure 4 shows a North Korean propaganda leaflet that uses a photograph of a South Korean female celebrity along with a nearly unpalatable message, “The best pride of Korean nation, Kim Jong Il,” casting doubt on whether these leaflets were really made and distributed literally by South and North Korean sides respectively. Unfortunately, there is no convincing evidence to prove the source of each leaflet, however that may not be necessary. Instead, we should ask whether or not substantial efforts by both North and South Korean military forces were made to understand the other’s socio-cultural and psychological conditions in fulfilling the principle of “knowing your enemy” in operating the psywar across the inter-Korean border.

Some experts on psywar continue to highlight the importance of understanding the opposite side's cultural specificities to make propaganda more efficient and powerful. It is clear that such cultural understanding of the "other" is not merely to incorporate a cultural relativist perspective in military operations, but rather ultimately to weaken, shake, and destroy the core power and belief structure of the enemy. As a form of media, propaganda leaflets are designed to meet this ultimate goal. A superficial understanding of the Other is not enough. Ultimately, knowledge of the "other" should be used to humiliate the core leadership or guiding principles, create emotional reactions like uncertainty, fear, anger, or desire to live or leave, and stimulate curiosity and suspicion. In other words, the propaganda leaflets reflect how much one side understands, misunderstands, and degrades the enemy.

Interestingly some North Korean male defectors who served in the North Korean military or the state intelligence agency testified to me that upon defecting to the South, they tried to contribute to developing the quality of South Korean propaganda aimed at North Korea. Mr. Kim, a North Korean ex-intelligence agent who defected to the South in the early 1990s said, "Of course, North Korean soldiers liked to see pictures of a naked lady on South Korean propaganda leaflets, but at the same time they considered it evidence that South Korean capitalist culture is completely rotten." This account reflects a typical North Korean moral principle based on the country's ruling philosophy, the Juche Ideology that divides human life into socio-political life and physical life, and emphasizes the former against the latter.<sup>12</sup> Sexual desire such as that stimulated by nude pictures on South Korean leaflets (e.g. Figure 3) is regarded to belong to the physical life, and is one of the reactionary ideas that North Korean soldiers should discredit. Another male North Korean also addressed to me how unpleasant he felt when discovering a naked woman on a South Korean leaflet. The unpleasant feeling, as an immediate reaction to the leaflet, might have been intended by the South Korean military to ridicule or disturb the morality of North Korean men in uniform, however, my North Korean interlocutors expressed their disapproval of the cultural ignorance of South Korean intelligence products such as the leaflets.

Their interpretation of the nature of South Korean military leaflets is complex: the first point to note is that the leaflet with female celebrities may only reflect a South Korean military culture in which male-centric sexuality has been explicitly

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12 The socio-political life could be equivalent to a way of living that purses spiritual and moral supremacy over material prosperity in a liberal society.

nurtured. The second is the extent to which the bloodline-centered ethnic nationalism unconsciously neglects the cultural differences of North Korea. The third is a likely culturally specific view in which sexual desire is conceived of as a universal human right (cf. Asad 2003).

The leaflets containing controversial information about the Korean War seemed to lead some North Koreans to suspect that what they had been taught was an unshakable truth. Mr. Lee recalls the moment when he began searching for the truth when he found a leaflet near the inter-Korean border:

It was not a picture of fully naked woman that destroyed my armed ideology. It was of course interesting and attractive on one hand, and it made me think ‘this is what a rotten bourgeois culture looks like’ on the other hand. ... Instead, it was [information] about the Korean War that made me look for the truth.

He had believed that the imperial US incited the war to colonize the Korean nation. North Korean schools provided concrete evidence of this with reference to newspapers published in the South right before the war broke out: a photo with an article about how the then-Secretary of State made an on-the-spot inspection at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and an article about the then-South Korean Defense minister, Shin Sŏng Mo, who stated “when we go to war, we will have breakfast in Haeju, lunch in Pyongyang, and dinner in Sinŭiju,”<sup>13</sup> according to Mr. Lee. The leaflet he read made him doubt the simple fact that it took only three days for the People’s Army to occupy Seoul at the beginning of the war. As the South Korean leaflet did not provide any further reliable information (he accused the intelligence division of the South Korean Ministry of National Defense of the shortcomings of the leaflet), he began himself to search for the truth, and eventually decided to flee to the South by way of China.

While military leaflets tend to rely on visual images such as pictures of women to induce immediate sensorial reactions from potential discoverers, other methods like shortwave broadcasts appeared to be particularly effective in delivering information.<sup>14</sup> Several North Korean defectors from relatively elite backgrounds have testi-

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13 Mr. Lee mentioned Sin Sŏng Mo, but it is reported that the person who stated “breakfast in Haeju, lunch in Pyongyang, and dinner in Sinŭiju” was Chae Byŏng Dŏk, then Chief of the General Staff.

14 As mentioned in an earlier section, a division of the Korean national broadcasting system (i.e., Sahoypangson of KBS), the Christian broadcasting company (i.e., Kŭkdongbangsong), and recently opened private broadcasting companies (e.g., Free North Korea Radio, Yŏlin Pukhan pangsong etc.), to name a few, are specifically targeting North Korean audiences and airing not only popular cultures but also Christian teachings during designated time slots of the day.

fied that they secretly listened to South Korean programs and were inspired to come to South Korea.<sup>15</sup>

To assess the effects of such psychological warfare in terms of the number of defectors on both sides, who were directly and indirectly influenced by the major propaganda broadcasts, is not of interest in this paper. Rather, I have tried to demonstrate a historical tendency, and the types and characteristics of state-led psychological warfare from the time of the Korean War to the 1990s. Mainly aimed at military forces and elite, each state spread types of advertising in various ways; “your government fools and exploits you, while you can live much better here than there”. Some believed the advertising and defected to the other side. At least in South Korea, the majority of North Korean defectors between the 1950s and the late 1980s (the number is approximately 600 over forty years) were from relatively elite backgrounds including military officers and soldiers, government officers, study abroad students, etc.<sup>16</sup> However, it is worthwhile to note that more than 65 per cent of North Korean defectors who have come by way of China to South Korea, as of today, are female and are not likely to be attracted by images of half-naked women printed on the South Korean leaflets of an earlier era. Also, more than 85 per cent of the total North Korean defectors originated from far northern cities that the South Korean leaflets hardly reached. During my previous field research among North Korean defectors in 2006-2007 at a South Korean church in Seoul, I rarely met or heard of anyone who recalled a direct experience of seeing South Korean leaflets.

This brings us to inquire into the more significant and serious effects engendered by state-led psychological warfare in the last decades – not toward the other but rather inwards. It was not unusual in Cold War politics to constantly and somewhat hysterically produce an “other” and oppress it at the same time in the name of national unity (cf. Bornemann 1992a). Whereas McCarthyism affected the US political-cultural landscape where existing racial and cultural differences became tol-

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15 Peter M. Beck, a regional specialist working for North Korean human rights, points out “defectors cite foreign radio-listening as one of the leading motivations to defect,” and suggests improving broadcasting to the North where he estimates that about one million individuals listen to the programs secretly (The Wall Street Journal, April 16, 2010 <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303828304575180752839519336>, accessed on April 3, 2014).

16 They were mostly rewarded as promised in the leaflet. An exemplary defector is Lee Ung Pyong, who defected in his jet fighter to South Korea in 1983. The amount of reward in cash value that he received was about one billion, which may be equivalent to more than ten million US dollars.

erated as long as all parties stood against communism (Caute 1978, cited in Kwon 2010: 74), South Korean militant regimes (1960s-1980s) both implemented cultural homogeneity in the society which was already ethnically homogeneous and otherized political activists and dissidents, who were further imprisoned, tortured, and sometimes executed under the pretext of national security. The same (or much worse, according my informants from North Korea) level of population control by state power has continued in the North. Thus the effects and impacts of such psychological warfare extend to the ways by which a state continues to monitor, inspect, suspect, and sometimes fabricate an “other” within its own population (cf. Borneman 1992b, Berdahl 1999), while at the same time deliberately exaggerating the benefits of life in its system to entice defectors.

The DMZ in the context of the Cold War Korean peninsula links the determination of modern subjects with each particular ideology and politico-economic system on either side of the two Koreas (Ahn 2010), just as other national borders serve their national identities (Rosaldo 1989, Paasi 1998, Ong 1996). The degree of intensity of the national identity construction in both Koreas, however, might have been more radical and extreme than anywhere else in the world, with both North and South Korean states investing astronomical sums of money into the literal militarization of their territories, even while the war is technically paused. The following section moves on to demonstrate the meaning of the privatization of these propaganda activities in the face of the changing geopolitical circumstances since the late 1990s.

### “Balloons are the only hope”: Privatization of Warfare

As mentioned above, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the geopolitical atmosphere on the Korean peninsula was transformed. The end of the Cold War, in conventional discourses, has had a devastating impact on the North Korean economy (cf. Kwon & Chung 2012: 9-42, Hargard & Noland 2007). In particular, since the death of the founding leader Kim Il Sung in 1994, the greatest famine in North Korean history occurred. Called “The Arduous March,” it is estimated that 2 to 3 million people died from starvation or related problems between 1995 and 1998, although no reliable statistics are available.

Desperate people living in towns near the Sino-North Korean border began crossing to China in search of food. In some places rivers that are shallow enough to cross mark the border. No one knows exactly how many North Koreans became illegal

migrant workers, victims of the sex trade, and/or have died in China. Good Friends, a Korean Buddhist organization working for North Korean refugees in the Sino-North Korean border estimated 300,000 in the late 1990s, and about 30,000-50,000 in 2005, echoing the estimates of the U.S. State Department (Choŭnpötdŭl [Good Friends] 1999, 2006, Kukgainkwŏnwiwŏnhoy 2007).

Among them, the number of those who have migrated to South Korea by way of China is about 25,000 as of at the end of 2013; approximately 70 per cent females and 30 per cent males. I have demonstrated elsewhere that more than 80 per cent of North Korean migrants identify themselves as Christian upon their arrival, and tend to continue relying on church services and networks in South Korea and beyond (Jung 2011). In my analyses of some North Korean migrants' conversion narratives (Jung 2010), I stressed that rather than remaining merely benefit-recipients, they claimed a leadership role in evangelizing North Korea, entailing a revitalization of anti-North Korean sentiment in South Korean churches.

Interestingly, although women make up 70 per cent of North Korean migrants in the South, it is mainly men from relatively elite or military backgrounds who lead the balloon-and-leaflet campaigns in the name of North Korean human rights and liberation. Fighters for Free North Korea (FFNK), Campaign for Helping North Koreans in Direct Way (NKDW), North Korean Christian Association (NKCA), and North Korean People's Liberation Front (NKPLF) are organizations actively launching balloons toward North Korea. In addition to these North Korean migrant-led organizations, their southern advocates include National Action Campaign for Freedom and Democracy in Korea, Korean Parents League, Chogabje.com, Family Association of South Korean POWs and Abductees, and Cornerstone Ministries to name a few. Suzanne Scholte from Defense Forum Foundation in the United States chairs the North Korea Freedom Coalition, one of the biggest supporters of the campaigns along with anonymous individual Christian donors.

For seven (2004-2010) out of the approximately sixty years of the inter-Korean conflicts, North and South Korean governments officially halted engaging in psychological warfare. The North Korean regime first proposed the end of such tactics as a precondition of the inter-Korean summit in 2000, and the South Korean Kim Dae Jung administration accepted it. After the general level military talks in 2004, both sides agreed to discontinue propaganda broadcasts against each other. In the midst of the North's great famine, increasing relief aid, commercial trade, cultural exchanges, and thus the flow of people mainly from South to North Korea, radically normalized the inter-Korean relationship. Such a post-division atmosphere lasted

about ten years from the late 1990s to 2007, when former political dissidents Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun were consecutively elected to the South Korean presidency.

It is in this changing geopolitical landscape, that South Korea ceased to view the North Korean regime as the national enemy set out to destroy South Korea, and considered the North as a partner in moving forward and improving both North and South Korean economic conditions.<sup>17</sup> The increasing improvements in the relationship with North Korea resulted in the 2000 summit and the construction of the Kaesŏng Industrial Complex (KIC) in Kaesŏng North Korea. KIC was developed in 2003 by Hyundai, Inc. in collaboration with the North Korean regime and South Korean private companies to employ North Koreans (about 53,000) to produce goods that eventually contributed to inter-Korean trade between 2007 and 2013.<sup>18</sup> However, such normalization of the inter-Korean relationship dependent upon the cessation of psychological warfare tactics was, for some anti-communists, an ominous sign of supporting the North Korean regime. Mr. Lee recalled the moment when he was shocked by the fact that the balloons would not be sent to the North anymore:

I decided to come to South Korea thanks to the leaflets that enlightened me from darkness...and wanted to work for making better and more understandable leaflets. I didn't think the Sunshine policy would work to destroy the North. That thing [*Jŏkŏt*, the term he used for the North Korean government indicates a lifeless thing] is interested in nothing but continuing its governing power by using the policy [i.e., the Sunshine policy offering various relief aid or economic assistance to the North].

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17 The Kim Dae Jung administration (1998-2002) rejected the policy of “containment” – the policy of his predecessors – toward North Korea, and promoted the “Sunshine Policy” based on the spirit of “national reconciliation and cooperation.” There are three guiding principles to the Sunshine Policy: first, no armed provocation by the North will be tolerated; second, the South will not attempt to absorb the North in any way; and third, the South actively seeks cooperation. This policy was continued by the Roh Moo-Hyun administration (2003-2007) of South Korea. The Sunshine policy is equivalent to the German *Ostpolitik* conceived by former Prime Minister Willy Brandt.

18 The Kaesŏng (Kaesong) Industrial Complex survived even when North and South Korean military forces were shelling each other in 2010, but closed down in April 2013 when inter-Korean military tension escalated. The North Korean government withdrew all North Korean employees from the region, and consequently South Korean companies had to relocate their production facilities to South Korea. In August 2013, the North and South Korean governments reached an agreement to reopen the complex on a trial basis (see “Koreas restart operations at Kaesong industrial zone,” BBC, September 16, 2013 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24104774> accessed on September 25, 2013)).



Mr. Lee expressed his frustration with both the North and South Korean regimes; for him, North Korean society is governed by a philosophy of abhorrence, “destroying basic humanity” (in the words of other informants), and thus it was absolutely “wrong” for the South Korean regime to begin considering the Kim regime as a partner. The Bush administration’s hard-line stance against North Korea was also crucial in the creation of a seemingly global civilian alliance against North Korea. Indeed, the Bush administration provided a special budget that was distributed by way of or directly to US based human rights organizations such as Mercy Corp. and Defense Forum Foundation to anti-North Korean organizations in the South. In other words, the normalization of the inter-Korean relationship encountered a backlash and resistance of enduring Cold War practices, including the balloon-and-leaflet campaign.

In that historical juncture, the polarization of the North and the South was reduced by both governmental and civil exchanges. At the same time, the polarization of ideology or political identity within South Korean society intensified.<sup>19</sup> During this period, the South Korean state tended to interrupt, rather than support, North Korean defectors’ anti-North Korean propaganda activities. The balloon-and-leaflet campaign saw periods of prohibition by South Korean police. A leader of Save North Korea described launches near the inter-Korean border as a game of hide-and-seek with the police.

However, the geopolitical climate has transformed again since President Lee Myung Bak took power in 2008 when the inter-Korean relationship froze and military tensions intensified. North Korea tested missiles and carried out nuclear tests, disregarding international warnings, while US-ROK joint military exercises took place regularly. As the conservatives reclaimed state power, the balloon campaign became a state “protected” activity rather than a “prohibited” one. More supporters and organizations participated in the campaign with various purposes and rationales but with the main goal to “awaken” the North Korean people so that they could ultimately lead the regime to collapse.

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<sup>19</sup> Evangelical church leaders led anti-North Korean street protests and new right wing protests against both state regimes, while presenting their firm support and coalition with the Bush administration in the name of national security and war on evil. The liberal South Korean regimes and their civilian supporters were dubbed as evil “Reds,” as a whole, and extreme terms like “ch’ongbuk,” (literally North Korean follower), “ch’wappal” (leftist red) appeared to clarify that there is no middle zone in the ideological landscape in South Korea. Homosexuals, protesters against US-South Korea Free Trade Agreement, and so forth are labeled as Reds in the conservative language and conversation.

Activists involved in the campaigns have developed and differentiated the contents and the forms of the leaflets in ways that differ from previous military ones. The following sections elaborate the contents and forms of the privatized campaigns, and discuss fundamental problems of their campaigns and further, the complicated and ambivalent consequences and questions that have arisen in the recent ideological landscape in South Korea.

### *Messages and Translation*

The contents and the aims of the civilian leaflets resemble those in previous military leaflets, namely, demonstrating South Korean supremacy in all respects over North Korea. However, there are fundamental differences that have resulted in heightened tension in the border area, and a resurrection of a type of McCarthyism within South Korean borders. The critical differences include a focus on (1) attacking the Kim regime directly as the satanic criminal of the Korean War and confronting all of its lies, (2) not exaggerating about South Korean society, (3) using no foreign (i.e., English) vocabulary, (4) using no cartoons or photos on the leaflets (CDs include photos), (5) including evangelical messages, and above all (6) writing in North Korean dialects.

The historical “truths” provided by leaflet makers are presented as “facts” regarding the origin of the Korean War and the stories of North Korean leaders. Thus they engage in the politics of historical memory or interpretation of history. With no single photo or image, most leaflets made by the organizations listed above are full of words, and bear a “retro” look compared in the military leaflets that were printed in color with attractive pictures and simple messages. However, North Korean migrant activists leading the balloon-leaflet campaigns are generally confident to claim that the information and knowledge the leaflets articulate as authentic and much more efficient.

The critical messages, to which the North Korean regime hysterically reacts the most by issuing shelling alerts to the South, are verbal abuse directed toward North Korean leaders including Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and the new leader Kim Jong Un. These directly attack the “heavily armed brain,” according to the activists who suggest that demystification of Kim Il Sung and his successors should be premised in order to reform the country.

In this light, the comparison between North Korean founder, Kim Il Sung or *Suryŏng* (the Supreme Leader) and Jesus Christ is provocative. It is an iconoclastic

attempt to disillusion North Korean people; for instance, one leaflet entitled “Believe Jesus Christ instead of Kim Il Sung” denotes the superiority of Jesus Christ to disgrace Kim Il Sung, it points out that Jesus’ birth year resulted in the Gregorian calendar, whereas only North Korea uses “Juche calendar” based on Kim Il Sung’s birthday, meaning Kim Il Sung is not appreciated in the world at all. This point is a counterargument against the daily news media coverage in the North that reports that world leaders send gifts to express their respects to Kim Il Sung. In the same vein, the Bible is revealed as the world’s bestselling book over the centuries, and that most developed countries are Christian-influenced states. South Korean economic prosperity is explained in relation to the prosperity of Christianity, as is China’s economic resurrection. Believing in Jesus Christ is thus claimed as a rational choice for overcoming chronic famine, political tyranny, and the inhumanity of everyday life.

In this spirit, along with the comparison between Kim Il Sung and Jesus Christ, the private leaflets list arguments against Kim Jong Il, including his birth place as Habarovski in Russia not Mount Baekdu (*Changbaishan* in Chinese), the place considered sacred in the North. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the demystification of the northern regime goes hand and hand with its demonization. That is, the balloon campaign activists tend to describe the North Korean regime as satanic and they advocate its destruction rather than portraying it as an enemy to be forgiven and loved as taught in the Bible. Comparisons of the North Korean regime with Satan signify an enduring conservative politico-evangelical perspective that is different from that of liberal Christians, progressive nationalists, and even ordinary people who have little interest in politics. In this religious view of Korean division history, freedom for North Korean people and peace on the peninsula can only be achieved by completely defeating the “satanic” regime with the power of the Holy Spirit.

To deliver the message, cultural relativism is instrumental in terms of using local vocabularies. Many North and South Koreans believe that they are speaking and writing in the same Korean language. However, polarization of the two Koreas has extended to the politics of language modernization; while the North tried to root out feudal/colonial/foreign influences in its revolutionary national language project,<sup>20</sup> the

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20 From the 1960s, when Kim Il Sung proposed a series of linguistic policies, “Munhwaŏ (literally cultural language)” became the North Korean standard language in which Japanese, feudal (i.e., Chinese characters), and foreign influences were eliminated, while centering on the Pyongyang dialect, and Kim Il Sung’s orthography. See Digital Encyclopedia of North Korea [http://erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/han/Kdatabase/www.kplibrary.com/document\\_view.aspx?no=712](http://erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/han/Kdatabase/www.kplibrary.com/document_view.aspx?no=712) for more information.

South was primarily less centralized and more than open to western cultures in which English or western vocabularies have become prevalent. North Korean migrants thus realize that vocabularies and ways of expressing ideas and feelings are radically different between the North and the South. It is clear that previous leaflets produced by the South Korean military forces or intelligence bureaus were not adequately mindful of the linguistic difference. For instance, North Koreans did not understand such words as *Hōnggari* (Hungary), *Poland* (Poland), and *Ssoryōn* (Soviet Union) to name a few. Only after becoming familiar with South Korean vocabularies, did the migrants recognize that they were country names, and they pointed out that the names should have instead been written as *Wengari*, *Ppolski*, and *Rossiya*, according to North Korean standard orthography.

It is apparent that for the balloon campaign activists the “truths” in the leaflets are antithetical to North Korean “myths.” The latter have been “militarized” throughout the course of North Korean education, whereas the former is designed to arouse their curiosity and inspire them to find and spread counter arguments. In other words, neither the “truths” nor North Korean “myths” are negotiable or reconcilable to the activists. Such a linear and evolutionary view is likely enhanced by the Korean evangelical logic of the conversion of the self and society. Enlightenment from irrational mythical ideology, i.e., from Kim Il Sung idolatry, to a more powerful substantial modern belief system such as Christianity is suggested as a viable option for North Korean people in the leaflets. This internal “rupture,” conversion from Juche myth to anti-Juche truth, aimed at social transformation, is dependent on individual free will. However, it is God who can transform the “armed” mind eventually, as echoed by Mr. Lee the North Korean activist.

### *Controversial Effects of the Balloon Campaign*

As the pioneer in propaganda studies, Jacques Ellul, points out the goal of modern propaganda is not to “modify ideas, but to provoke action. It is no longer to change adherence to a doctrine, but to make the individual cling irrationally to a process of action.” And further, he says that “it is no longer to transform an opinion but to arouse an active and mythical belief” (Ellul 1973: 25). To maximize the effects, to make individuals act with conviction, the scientific analyses of individuals and complex environments should ground the production of propaganda. Such analysis sheds light on facets of civilian led exercises including their need to develop techniques and technologies and raise funds for successful preparation and deployment.

In comparison, it was reported that the South Korean state spent about one thousand US dollars to launch one set of balloons, which included leaflets and various products such as a radio, underwear, spices, snacks, etc. that could make the receivers envy South Korean society. This cost might include all related expenses undertaken by military units.

In contrast, the privatized balloon campaigns rely on “private” donations, develop the techniques and technology with limited budget, and thus are inevitably involved in “internal” competitions and conflicts.

First, fundraising matters the most. Considering the relative cost, a privatized balloon campaign requires much less than a state funded military exercise, but it has become even cheaper; a full size balloon now costs about 120,000 KRW (app. 100 USD), and includes 60 thousand leaflets as well as small gifts such as ball-point pens, scarves, underwear, bandages, medicine, radios, and one USD or similar currency (equivalent to a North Korean average monthly income or 3,000 North Korean Won as of 2012). Even though the cost has dropped, the organizations and individual activists need financial support for their operations. Similar to most non-government organizations in South Korea, they advertise their bank account information on their websites calling for regular donations from individual or organizational advocates all over the world. Some of my interlocutors told me that financial support from international organizations such as the Defense Forum Foundation and overseas churches account for a significant portion of the sponsorship. But the amount of the budget each organization needs and spends to carry out the balloon campaigns is difficult to assess. In reality, multiple organizations that are involved in the campaigns compete with one another for limited resources.

Second, in addition to the competition between organizations, weather and technology emerge as the most crucial elements with respect to the credibility of such campaigns. Because the wind determines how far and where the balloons can be flown, to explode and drop the leaflets to the ground,<sup>21</sup> Mr. Lee, the North Korean defector leading one balloon campaign stressed that he had to be ready to drive whenever the wind direction was expected to be good enough. An iPad and smart phone with unlimited 3G (now 4G) internet connection are fundamental devices

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21 As a native Korean, when I was serving at an artillery unit near the west border, we had to readjust the cannon barrels every hour according to the wind speed and direction calculated with what we called “metro” data collected by launching a balloon with a special device that checked the wind direction and speed. A neighboring US Marine unit launched the military device, to check the wind direction, as well as balloons with leaflets and goods when the wind blew enough to carry on them northwards over the ceasefire line.

he relies on in addition to his 2.5 ton truck and equipment to fill the balloons with hydrogen gas.

At the beginning of this campaign, in 2003, I launched small balloons that I bought from a stationery shop. I filled them with helium gas but since I wanted to launch bigger balloons, it became too expensive and unreliable. A university professor taught me to put hydrogen which is much lighter and is cheaper than helium gas.

He and his fellow activists have gradually developed the necessary technology on their own in spite of the military's accumulation of the same technology decades before. Presently, each of his balloons is 12 meters tall and can carry a 7.5 kg bag that contains about 60,000 small size leaflets or 1,500 newspaper-size leaflets and the aforementioned aid goods. All these techniques that were once military secrets are now advertised in public. Not surprisingly, however, whether "truth and hope" are eventually and successfully delivered to the North Korean people is not always clear. Mr. Lee himself brought up this suspicion when he was addressing his fellow organizations' way of carrying out the campaign.

I think they lie that their balloons have reached to the North. It is all just performance to attract media attention that may be crucial to raise more funds. You know they are always launching the balloons at Imjingak (a tourist area near the border). Even though the wind is blowing to the northeast, the balloons would be flying to the East Sea or at best mountain areas in Gangwon province. There is no way to reach Pyongyang from Imjingak. No one knows where the balloons go once they disappear from our sight.

What he mentioned is crucial in understanding a microcosm of privatized psychological war. Mr. Lee condemned his fellow activists for ignoring the location and wind condition and being more interested in raising funds through the performance of a political "show," as he describes it. For him, they are not truly humanitarian even though they put the value of human rights first.

Despite Mr. Lee's criticism of his associates, the political "show" has provoked a series of immediate and fatal reactions from Pyongyang and fueled polarized disputes in Seoul's politico-ideological landscape. Pyongyang publicly condemned the South Korean government for tolerating such anti-North Korean activity in violation of the inter-Korean agreement stopping the psywar in 2004. South Korean national intelligence agents arrested a North Korean spy being accused of planning the assassination of one of the balloon-leaflet campaign activists in 2011 and, as of mid 2012, Pyongyang warned the South more than fifty times each year that its artillery units would shell the areas where the balloons launch.

Note that the inter-Korean ceasefire line became much more heavily militarized in recent years; military aggression killed not only men in uniform but also civilians and destroyed military bases and villages on both sides. For instance, the Chōnan, a South Korean Navy ship was sunk by an explosion during the US-ROK joint military exercise in 2010 March, with forty six sailors killed. A joint international investigation team, led by South Korea, concluded that a North Korean torpedo destroyed the ship, although the North denied it. Late that year, North Korean artillery was fired and killed people on Yōnpyōng Island as a response to South Korean military exercises. Not surprisingly, the South Korean right wing supported tougher government action against North Korea. By the end of the year, the South Korea's Ministry of Defense allowed Christians to erect a giant Christmas tree on Aegibong Peak only two miles south of the DMZ. North Korea publically warned that they would shell the area as the brightly lit Christmas tree could allegedly be seen in Kaesōng, North Korea, and was considered a symbol of South Korean psychological warfare.

Increasing inter-Korean tension seems to put both Korea's national security at risk. Indeed, though, it tends to help the conservative New Frontier Party secure the presidency – they won the election on December 19, 2012. In North Korea, the regime of the new leader, Kim Jong Un, carried out the country's third nuclear test in spring 2013 and Kim Jong Un moved to secure the leadership by executing his uncle. In the context of this process of remilitarization of the two Korea's, the political “show” or “ritual” of the privatized balloon-leaflet campaigns privately taking place across the inter-Korean border tends to demonstrate cultural meanings of a border. That is, their performance reminds people that Imjingak, where they launch balloons, is the frontier facing the “enemy,” not a tourist site inspiring a romantic getaway. Therefore, my interlocutors are right to suggest that launching balloons toward the North from Imjingak is not merely aimed at North Korea, but rather at international audiences in liberal societies, as they disseminate a reminder that the Cold War is not over in this area.

## Conclusion

This paper has given the historical context and documented a type of psychological warfare that is now carried out by civil organizations in pursuit of a radical social transformation in North Korea. While analyzing the contents and forms of state-led

balloon-propaganda aimed at the “enemy” force, I have also indicated how the state controls the ideological identity of its population. When North Korea suffered a great famine and South Korea was hit by the Asian economic crisis, the inter-Korean relationship became normalized, and the half a century long propaganda broadcasts were officially halted. The “Sunshine Policy” obscured the division between communists and capitalists. Some South Korean intellectuals and activists called that period a post-division era (Cho Han 2000) since people came to imagine what a reunified nation would and should look like. However, it was at this historical juncture that the balloon-and-leaflet campaign reappeared in the DMZ area. The second part of this paper elaborated the contents and methods of the balloon campaign and its discursive effects and consequences in relation to the recently intensified inter-Korean tensions.

What is significant in the privatization of psychological warfare in the South is that the nature of “the state of emergency” (Agamben 2005), which persists for the “necessity” of national security in the context of national division, is mutated rather than removed. Though few in the South know exactly what is going on in the North, signs indicate that it is enhanced there. Giorgio Agamben theorizes on that state of emergency (often translated as the state of exception) that constitutes the cardinal foundation of modern state power, saying that it is right to say that both North and South Korean people have experienced the sense of national emergency as a “normative” rather than “temporary” condition throughout the decades since the Korean War (1950-53). Anthropologists studying North Korea, though their numbers are still few, tend to agree with the perspective that such a state of emergency continues with little transformation in North Korea (c.f. Ryang 2012: 131-139). However, the evangelical balloon campaigns carried out in South Korea show that not only is the state utilizing political and legal terms, but also the people who have internalized the logic and virtues of the state emergency and then utilize religious language and practices to define the “permanent” ideological emergency. The emergency is experienced and always enacted by the virtual existence of the ceasefire line, the inter-Korean border, which serves to define what ideas, goods, people, and feelings are legitimate or in need of being purged or destroyed by multiple actors in the South, mainly through seemingly “universal” norms like human rights, “truth and hope,” and salvation. Note that state power has never disappeared in the South either. It can and does exercise its “exceptional” power by means of the National Security Law, which guarantees hardline approaches, and often “ludicrous” legal law enforcement over its subjects anytime and anywhere.



The privatized balloon-and-leaflet campaigns can be seen as a serious violation of the National Security Law simply because activists try to “communicate” with the enemy across the border, and it could result in North Korean retaliation and thus threaten national security. However, it is the language of basic human rights, in particular the freedom of expression, which the current South Korean conservative administration uses to respond to the North Korean regime and South Korean critics. However, the freedom of expression and gathering, as in the struggles of the labor movement, gay rights movement, peace movement, anti-neoliberalism movement, have been and still are neglected and often denied on the pretext of national security in South Korea. In this light, it is relevant to reflect on recent scholarly concerns about the neoliberal context in which the state no longer protects its citizen’s social safety nets but only secures the interests of transnational investigators and its power maintenance (c.f. Goldstein 2010, McLoughlin and Forte 2013).

The privatized psywar in the context of inter-Korean power dynamics is not only seen as a local civilian adaptation and expression of “the neoliberal logic that urges self-help and the ‘responsibilization’ of citizens” (Goldstein 2010: 498) in assuring their own ideological and political identity in terms of national security. It should be also understood in a larger transnational scheme and context in which international, though mainly US-based, non-government communities like the Defense Forum Foundation, domestic activists, North Korean defectors, established South Korean conservatives, and Christians claiming to represent God take part in both crossing and demarcating the line between North and South psychological and ideological differences when they launch balloons with leaflets. The balloons that are claimed to carry “truth” about histories and realities, and “hope” for a better life in this and other worlds indeed usually fly up in spiral toward the South first, and, only when reaching sufficient altitude and a stream of northward wind, can they arrive somewhere in North Korea. The spiral shape is a fitting metaphor for the reality that the civilian balloons of “truth and hope” are likely to awaken the fear, suspicion and anxiety that have been routinized in everyday struggles in a country like South Korea, a liberal democratic society where the Cold War legacy is omnipresent.

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