

# Crisis in Korea:

## America, China, and the Risk of War

### A note on transliteration of Korean

Korea was traditionally written using Chinese characters and then from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards in an alphabet called *Hangul*. In North Korea this is called *Chosongul*. As with any other language, Korean can be transliterated into other alphabets, most commonly the Latin alphabet, a process called *romanisation*. This can work the other way around; a couple of years ago a South Korean NGO caused a stir by devising a written language for a tribe in Indonesia not by using the Latin alphabet, which is Indonesian practice, but using *hangul*

A number of *romanisation* systems for Korean have been developed and it is quite common to see the same word transliterated in different ways, even in one part of the divided country. Thus Incheon (the site of the landing in 1950 and subsequently South Korea's international airport) has become Incheon, and Pusan is officially now spelt Busan.

The very name Korea is contested. Many claim that the original romanisation was *Corea*, but this was changed by the Japanese to Korea so that it would come behind Japan in an alphabetic list.<sup>1</sup>

North and South often transliterate differently so here is a table giving some of the more common, and or more relevant, variations. Sometimes Korean geographical terms are tagged on to the end, and sometimes not. The most common are –san (mountain) and –do (island).

This list is a preliminary one and will be added to from time to time. It is far from exhaustive and suggestions for new entries are very welcome

Wikipedia gives an good overview at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean\\_romanization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_romanization)

A further complication is the revised romanisation introduced into the South in 2000. This is described in Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised\\_Romanization\\_of\\_Korean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_Romanization_of_Korean). This is becoming increasingly commonly used in South Korea, but many still use the old forms. Key examples of relevance here are Busan for Pusan, Incheon for Inchon, Gaesong for Kaesong, and Geumgansan for Kungangsan

North		South	
<i>Usual</i>	<i>Other variant</i>	<i>Usual/official</i>	<i>Other variant(s)</i>
<b>Place names</b>			
Paengyong-Do		Baengnyeong	Baekryeong
Taechong-Do			
Sochong-Do			
Yonphyong	Yonpyong-Do	Yeonpyeong	
U-Do		Woo	

		Busan	Pusan
		Incheon	Inchon
Kaesong		Gaesong	Kaesong
Kumgangsan	Mt Kumgang	Geumgangsan	Kumgangsan
Paektu <sup>2</sup>		Baekdu	Paektu
<b>Names</b>			
Pak		Park	
		Lee	Rhee, Li

Demick, Barbara. "Korea or Coreā? Debate is historical, political." *Seattle Times*, 17 September 2003  
2003.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Demick, "Korea or Coreā? Debate is historical, political," *Seattle Times*, 17 September 2003  
2003.

<sup>2</sup> The mountain on the border with China. Wikipedia notes the variant spellings: Baekdu Mountain, also known as Changbai Mountain in China, is a volcanic mountain on the border between North Korea and China, located at 42°00'24"N 128°03'18"E / 42.00667°N 128.055°E / 42.00667; 128.055. At 2,744 m (9,003 ft), it is the highest mountain of the Changbai mountain range to the north and Baekdudaegan mountain range to the south. It is also the highest mountain on the Korean peninsula and Manchuria.

The Korean name, Baekdu-san (백두산, 白頭山; Korean pronunciation: [pɛk̚t̚ʌsan]), means "white-headed mountain". The Chinese name, Changbai Shan (長白山/长白山), means "ever-white mountain". English-language volcanology resources often refer to the mountain as Baitoushan from the Chinese pinyin rendering of the Korean Hanja 白頭山.

Its name variants include Paektu-san[2] (Korean 백두산[3]), Ch'ang Pai,[4] Chang-pai Shan,[5] Chōhaku-san,[6] Hakutō,[7] Hakutō-san,[8] Hakutō-zan,[9] Paik-to-san,[10] Pai-t'ou Shan,[11] Mount Paitoushar,[12] Paitow Shan,[13] Pei-schan[14] and Bai Yun Feng.