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THE TWO KOREAS AND THE GREAT POWERS

This book explores Korea's place in a rapidly changing world in terms of multiple levels and domains of interaction pertaining to foreign policy behaviors and relations with the four regional/global powers (China, Russia, Japan, and the United States). The synergy of global transformations has now brought to an end Korea's proverbial identity and role as the helpless shrimp among whales, and both North Korea and South Korea have taken on new roles in the process of redefining and projecting their national identities. Synthetic national identity theory offers a useful perspective on change and continuity in Korea's turbulent relationships with the great powers over the years. Following a review of Korean diplomatic history and competing international relations theoretical approaches, along with a synthetic national identity theory as an alternative approach, one chapter is devoted to how both Koreas relate to each of the four powers in turn, and the book concludes with a consideration of inter-Korean relations and potential reunification.

Samuel S. Kim is an adjunct professor of political science and senior research scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, New York. He previously taught at the Foreign Affairs Institute, Beijing, China, as a Fulbright professor (1985–86) and at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (1986–93). He is the author or editor of twenty-two books on East Asian international relations and world order studies, including *China, the United Nations and World Order* (1979); *The Quest for a Just World Order* (1984); *China and the World* (ed., 1984, 1989, 1994, 1998); *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era* (ed., 1998); *Korea's Globalization* (ed., 2000); *East Asia and Globalization* (ed., 2000); and *The International Relations of Northeast Asia* (ed., 2004). He has published more than 150 articles in edited volumes and leading international relations journals, including *American Journal of International Law*, *Asian Perspective*, *Asian Survey*, *China Quarterly*, *International Interactions*, *International Organization*, *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *World Policy Journal*, and *World Politics*.

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*For
Helen,
with Gratitude,
Joy, and
Love . . .*

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Preface

The Korean peninsula, although situated at the crossroads of Northeast Asia, has often been home to political entities that sought isolation from the world outside. In the twentieth century, however, Korea's attempts to maintain itself as the "hermit kingdom" were overthrown in succession by Japanese colonization, the World War II settlement, the beginning of the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, and the intensification of globalization. Because of the course of international history following World War II, on the Korean peninsula today there are two Korean states, whereas for the 1,269 previous years there had been only one. North and South Korea as we know them today do not exist as entities entirely of their own making but rather as two incomplete nation-states with national identities crafted in the cauldron of Cold War conflict and galvanized in the post-Cold War age of globalization.

With a synthetic interactive approach to studying foreign relations as its starting point, this book explores how the identities of North and South Korea have evolved in relation to the Big Four of Northeast Asia: China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. Just as for individuals there can be no definition of the self without reference to some other, so with nation-states there can be no development of national identity without reference to the set of other actors in world politics. For the two Korean states, these referents include the Confucian empire-cum-socialist experiment, China; the former colonial occupier, Japan; the formerly meddlesome and now cautious friend to all, Russia; the South Korean savior and North Korean nemesis, the United States; and, perhaps most important, the mirror against which each Korea most closely judges itself – the other Korea across the thirty-eighth parallel.

As regional and international politics interact on the Korean peninsula, the synergy of momentous global transformations – democratization, the

end of the Cold War and its superpower rivalry, and globalization – has now brought Korea's proverbial identity and role as the helpless shrimp among whales decisively to an end. Even though Korea's search for a national identity has been unusually tumultuous because of the vast gap between role capabilities and role commitments, South Korea today is no longer a pawn but a pivotal player in Northeast Asian economics, security, and culture. North of the demilitarized zone, the other Korean state has survived, despite a rapid succession of external shocks on top of a series of seemingly fatal internal woes. In fact, not only has North Korea, the weakest of the six main actors in Northeast Asia, continued to exist, but it has also catapulted itself as a primary driver of Northeast Asian geopolitics through its strategic use of nuclear brinkmanship diplomacy.

In North and South Korea, we have two countries that hearken back to bygone historical eras even as they herald the coming of new ones in Northeast Asia. Through the lens of the Korean peninsula, we can examine how Northeast Asia has evolved in the post-Cold War world from a region firmly entrenched in East–West conflict to one with a broader range of possible alliances and antagonisms, and we also can forecast possible futures for the regional order, including issues of security conflict, economic cooperation, cultural assertion, and Korean reunification. Through the lens of the Big Four of Northeast Asia, it becomes clear how North and South Korea are integral to these processes, and how they have been and will continue to be defined as nation-states in the context of regional history and ongoing processes. There is much movement and fluctuation in Korean foreign relations, but by looking at how national identity interacts with military, economic, and functional foreign policy goals, it is the intention in this book to pin down these trajectories and locate them in a space to which all global citizens can relate.

It is somewhat embarrassing to admit that this book has had a gestation period of almost a decade. A study of this nature and duration owes a great deal to the contributions of many people who have participated in the conception of the work, as well as in the individual and collective remedies to the many problems and shortcomings.

From the very beginning, the research and writing of this book has been closely keyed to and shaped by my teaching of a graduate course in Korean Foreign Relations for the past twelve or so years in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University. This experience served as a kind of force multiplier, providing not only the primary reason and audience, but also an ideal testing laboratory and an invaluable opportunity to try out some of the ideas embodied in the book. In a real sense, then, this book is an offspring of this course (as my lecture notes and many discussions with my students provided first-cut materials and ideas to further my research and rewriting). So my thanks go to many serious students in the course for their contributions to the shaping of the book.

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PREFACE

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Without field interviews of many different kinds, this study would have lost a vital primary source for delineating the motivational and behavioral dimensions of the many contentious issues involved in the relations of the two Koreas with the Big Four. From May to June 1998 and from early to late June 2000, I conducted field research in Seoul and Beijing, as well as conducted many interviews with current and former government officials on a confidential basis in order to broaden my understanding of behind-the-scenes internal debates on many controversial political, military, and diplomatic issues. Unfortunately, my contacts with North Korean diplomats were limited to only two closed executive – Track I.5 – meetings in New York and a few visits by North Korean “NGO” delegations to Columbia’s Center for Korean Research. I have liberally taken advantage of my position as chair of the (monthly) Contemporary Korean Affairs Seminar (1994–present) in conducting “informal interviews” – the functional equivalent of my extensive field interviews in the United States, as it were – either before or after the formal seminar presentations of the participants. The keynote seminar speakers were more or less divided evenly between Americans and South Koreans: former U.S. government officials or ambassadors and then-current South Korean ambassadors to the United States and prominent Koreanist scholars and journalists. This book has been immeasurably enriched by the many informal interviews with those keynote seminar speakers: Donald Gregg, William Gleestein, Thomas Hubbard, Wendy Sherman, Charles Kartman, Phillip Yun, Charles Pritchard, Robert Gallucci, Desaix Anderson, Mitchell Reiss, Lee Hong koo, Park Soo Gil, Yang Sung Chul, Marcus Noland, Nicholas Eberstadt, Bruce Cumings, Kathy Moon, Victor Cha, John Merrill, Leon Sigal, David Steinberg, Steve Linton, Chong Sik Lee, Myung Soo Lee, Choi Jang Jip, Don Oberdorfer, Selig Harrison, David Kang, Chung-in Moon, Ilpyong Kim, Manwoo Lee, Sonia Ryang, Seungsook Moon, Scott Snyder, C. Kenneth Quinones, Lee Sook-jong, and Cameron Hurst.

I have benefited from the critical reading and helpful comments of a number of individual friends and colleagues in the fields of Korean studies and international relations. James Seymour, John Feffer, Jack Snyder, and Matt Winters all read parts of the manuscript with helpful comments and suggestions for substantive improvement. In the course of the peer review and vetting process at Cambridge University Press, three anonymous readers provided critical and perceptive comments and suggestions for the final revisions of the manuscript for publication.

During the preparation of this work, I was greatly assisted by the overall facilities and congenial atmosphere provided by the Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI) and the Department of Political Science, Columbia University, and want to express my thanks to my area studies and international relations colleagues for their continuing support and encouragement. The WEAI’s research atmosphere was most congenial to

my particular project because each academic year it attracts a dozen visiting scholars and professional Fellows from China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan to interact with resident faculty members in East Asian area studies drawn from political science, history, sociology, and economics through numerous brown-bag noon lecture series, colloquia, Weatherhead Policy Forum, faculty research lunches, and so on.

As befits a project so long in the making, I have received considerable research help from a number of my graduate student research assistants in recent years – Joon Seok Hong, Abraham Kim, Ji In Lee, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Erik Tolleson, and Janice Yoon. I would like to thank them all for their diligent library or online research tasks. Above all, I am most grateful to Matthew Winters, who read my next-to-last draft with care and insight that would amaze anyone unacquainted with him; as a graduate student, he is already endowed with the critical, conceptual, and analytical power of an established international relations scholar.

The McCune-Reischauer romanization system is used throughout this book, with some familiar exceptions for well-known place names (e.g., Pyongyang, Seoul, Pusan) and personal names (e.g., Syngman Rhee, Park Chung Hee, Kim Dae Jung, Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, Kang Sok Ju) that would otherwise be difficult to recognize.

It was a pleasure to work with Cambridge University Press in the production of this book. I am particularly grateful to Frank Smith, social science editor, for his support and encouragement and for his role as an invaluable navigator throughout the publication process. Special thanks are due to Cathy Felgar and for the publisher's efficient steering of the manuscript through the various stages of production.

As always, without the unflagging forbearance, support, and music of my wife Helen, the most significant other – yes, she is a professor of music, not political science – this project would never have come to fruition. By participating in every step of this long and seemingly endless journey of revisions and updates, and by providing me the chance to share its opportunity costs with a collaborative spirit, she sufficiently prodded me to finish this project before it finished me. Hence, this is as much her book as it is mine.

Because the two Koreas still remain in many ways moving targets on turbulent and indeterminate trajectories, I am reluctant to declare the manuscript complete. Nonetheless, I do so now – without a sense of completion but with a deep sigh of relief and a deep sense of gratitude to the many individuals who helped me along the endless road. The usual disclaimer still applies: I alone am responsible for whatever local, inter-Korean, regional, and global errors in fact or interpretation may remain in the book.