

2014  
Vol. 25



# JOINT U.S.-KOREA ACADEMIC STUDIES

ASIA'S SLIPPERY SLOPE: TRIANGULAR  
TENSIONS, IDENTITY GAPS,  
CONFLICTING REGIONALISM, AND  
DIPLOMATIC IMPASSE TOWARD  
NORTH KOREA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:  
GILBERT ROZMAN

JOINT U.S.-KOREA  
ACADEMIC STUDIES

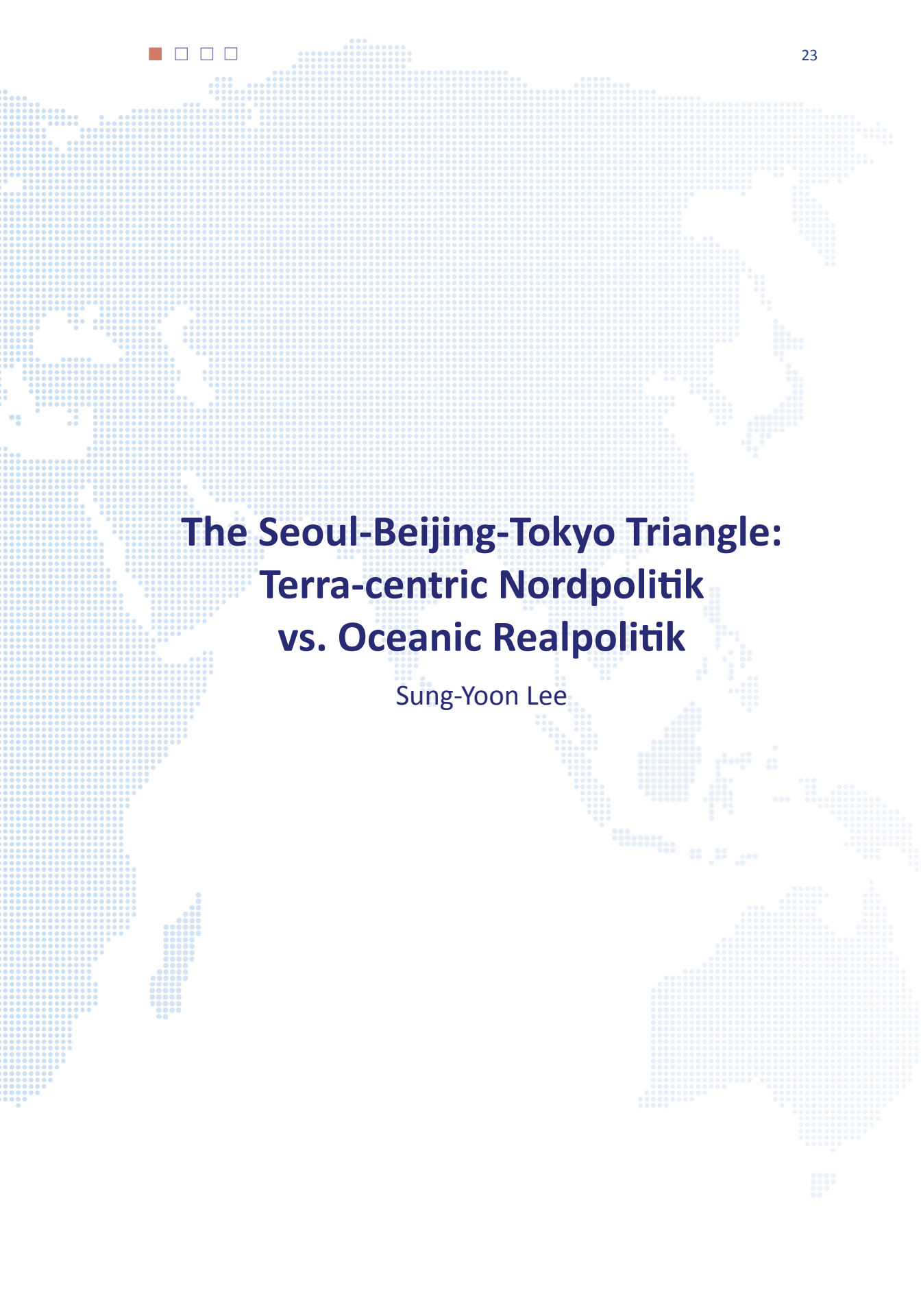
2014 | VOLUME 25

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
GILBERT ROZMAN  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY





# SOUTH KOREA'S TRIANGULAR RELATIONS



# The Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo Triangle: Terra-centric Nordpolitik vs. Oceanic Realpolitik

Sung-Yoon Lee

History has shown that a power vacuum on the Korean Peninsula is an invitation to aggression. The 60-year-period from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 to the end of the Korean War stands in marked contrast to the 60-year-period of de facto peace since 1953. In the former, four major wars enveloped Korea and its vicinity, including the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and the Second Sino-Japanese War. In the latter, the balance of power has been maintained primarily by virtue of the U.S.-ROK alliance, albeit at the cost of periodic lethal attacks and threats from North Korea. This chapter addresses the historical lessons of power shift in Northeast Asia for contemporary international politics and the strategic implications of South Korea's embrace of China and its seeming inability to overcome, in Korean parlance, "issues of the past" with Japan.

In the present security dynamics in Northeast Asia, which closely resemble the Cold War configuration of the U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance vs. the PRC-Russia-DPRK contingent, South Korea's recent tilt toward China and apathy for Japan come at considerable potential cost to its own long-term national interest as well as peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Its need to protect its vital economic relations with China and not jeopardize the overall relationship is evident; but its future security and commercial interests can best be advanced within the U.S.-led alliance structure—even with the bilateral historical issues between Seoul and Tokyo. The next major geopolitical shift or "change in the status quo" in the region will likely emanate from North Korea. China, which, arguably, nods in approval at North Korea's provocations while issuing occasional protestations, is poised to further bolster its significant leverage vis-à-vis Pyongyang and Seoul by exploiting its "North Korea card" in the long-term strategic competition against the United States. Beijing's seemingly unrelenting strategic support of Pyongyang has serious implications for North Korea's denuclearization and Korean unification, a reality that remains unaffected by the bonhomie overflowing from the Park Geun-hye-Xi Jinping summit on June 26, 2013. Unable to withstand the military threat coming from North Korea and China on its own, Japan has dramatically bolstered its U.S. alliance, as borne out in the October 3, 2013 meeting of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC). Is Seoul now the weakest link in this military standoff?

## SOUTH KOREA'S NOT-SO-STRATEGIC TRIANGULAR RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND JAPAN

A snapshot of South Korea in early March 2014 may lend weight to the following unproven dictum (embraced by this particular author): Triangular relations among states may at times be as convoluted and toxic as those among individuals. According to a March 3 phone survey of 1000 South Koreans by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, asking respondents to rate the leaders of North Korea, Japan, the United States, China, and Russia, Kim Jong-un came out ahead of Abe Shinzo by a margin of 1.3 to 1.1 on the survey's zero-to-ten scale, zero being the least favorable.<sup>1</sup> Among the leaders of five nations, Barack Obama led with a score of 6.2, followed by Xi Jinping at just under 5, with Vladimir Putin next at 3.5, before popularity plummeted to the depths seen only for Kim and Abe.

That South Koreans overall favor Obama, the leader of the sole treaty ally, makes sense to observers. However, the notion that citizens of an open democracy (that faces an existential threat from the DPRK, an alternate Korean state that is ruled by a menacing dynastic

dictatorship) actually favor the leader of China (a single-party communist dictatorship that shares with the DPRK an alliance forged in blood)<sup>2</sup> over the leader of Japan (a wealthy democracy and neighbor to which it is strategically aligned by virtue of the U.S. alliance structure in the region) may seem counterintuitive.<sup>3</sup> Even higher on the counterintuitive scale is preference for Kim Jong-un, a third-generation totalitarian leader who apparently was behind North Korea's torpedoing of a South Korean navy ship and the shelling of an inhabited island in 2010, and who brutally keeps tens of thousands of innocent North Koreans as political prisoners in gulags,<sup>4</sup> over Japan's elected leader—Abe's occasional irritating remarks and deeds that seem to deny Japan's past criminal actions against Korea notwithstanding.

Opinion surveys are often unreliable as public opinion is fickle. Moreover, a nation's foreign policy, purportedly pursued in the national interest, may not correlate closely with the prevailing opinion of the day. Hence, South Koreans' apparent counterintuitive attitude toward the leaders of Japan, North Korea, and China may variously be considered a transient phenomenon, a manifestation of irrational ethno-nationalism, or not particularly germane to actual policy vis-à-vis these three powers. On the first proposition that the public's aversion to the Japanese leader, and by extension his government, may be a transitory phenomenon, in actuality, relations between Seoul and Tokyo have steadily declined since 2012. In particular, with Lee Myung-bak's visit in August 2012 to Dokdo (Takeshima), the bilateral relationship took a noticeable dip.<sup>5</sup> Upon arrival, Lee, the first South Korean head of state to visit the territory, declared to the squadron of ROK police officers guarding the islets, "Dokdo is truly our territory, and it's worth defending with our lives,"<sup>6</sup> deliberately fanning the flames of Korean nationalism.

Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko condemned Lee's visit as "completely unacceptable," pledging to take a "resolute stance on this matter,"<sup>7</sup> while his foreign minister characterized the visit as "utterly unacceptable" and recalled his ambassador in Seoul.<sup>8</sup> With both the return of Abe and the election of Park Geun-hye as president in December 2012, prospects for improved bilateral relations seemed to improve; however, the trajectory of decline in the bilateral relationship has only dipped more steeply since the leadership transitions took place in Seoul and Tokyo.<sup>9</sup>

On the second proposition that South Koreans' strong sentiments against Japan betray their "irrational" nature,<sup>10</sup> it is clear that few actions are as effective in domestic politics as fanning the flames of anti-Japanese sentiment. After Shimane Prefecture in 2005 designated February 22 as "Takeshima Day,"<sup>11</sup> invoking the decision a hundred years earlier placing "Takeshima" (Dokdo) under it, Roh Moo-hyun responded a week later, on March 23, that South Korea was on the verge of a "tough diplomatic war with Japan."<sup>12</sup> Casting this decision as a portent of a greater threat, Roh wrote in a letter addressed to his fellow Koreans, "We cannot sit back and watch Japan justify its history of aggression and colonization and pursue hegemonic power again... The issue concerns the future of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia."<sup>13</sup> Inflammatory rhetoric often begets even more inflammatory rhetoric, and Japan's *Nihon Keizai shimbun* questioned Roh's leadership, painting him as one "easily swayed" by public opinion, even going so far as to call his emotional language "just like North Korea."<sup>14</sup> Democratic Party of Japan (DJP) lawmaker Nishimura Shingo went so far as to characterize Roh's remarks as tantamount to throwing the Korea-Japan relationship into a ditch<sup>15</sup>

Park Geun-hye, at the time chairwoman of the opposition Grand National Party, opined, “I cannot but wonder whether President Roh’s remarks are appropriate;”<sup>16</sup> yet within days his approval rating jumped from 20 percent to 48 percent, with 89 percent of South Koreans supporting Roh’s feisty remarks.<sup>17</sup> Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon stated that Roh’s statements represented the ROK government’s “strategic mind,” justifying it after the fact, for by all accounts the foreign ministry was kept in the dark about Roh’s “letter” until its contents became public. A precedent was set, potentially at the cost of the national interest. The lessons were clear: It paid to antagonize Japan when the South Korean public felt Japan had been the provocateur. What is more, bashing Japan has the added advantage of winning over North Korea,<sup>18</sup> which is an attractive proposition to any elected South Korean leader intent on improving ties with Pyongyang and chalking up a North Korea legacy.

On the third proposition, whether the public’s distaste for Abe impinges on actual ROK foreign policy, it is apparent that Park Geun-hye came into office with predetermined views not only on Abe and South Korea’s bilateral relations with Japan but also on Xi Jinping and Seoul’s bilateral relations with Beijing. China’s ascendance in world affairs over the past decade has been all the more pronounced in the international politics of the Korean Peninsula and the region as a whole.<sup>19</sup> Whereas it exercised no real influence over the course of events during the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, since the second nuclear crisis flared up in October 2002, Beijing has assumed a central role, both as the key determinant in negotiations and as the key arbiter of any meaningful punishment to be meted out against North Korea for its continued provocations. More than in any other period since its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and its consequent loss of influence, China enjoys great sway over the future course of the peninsula. Its economic influence is irreplaceable to Pyongyang, and it is a factor that Seoul is extremely reluctant to defy.<sup>20</sup>

Park has placed great importance on continuing to strengthen bilateral relations with China. Barely a month after her election victory on December 19, 2012, she broke with tradition and dispatched her first special envoys abroad to Beijing instead of Washington.<sup>21</sup> Sequencing of summit meetings with leaders of key neighboring states is not without symbolism. What is more telling than the first destination for her special envoys was that she chose not to send any envoy to Tokyo—although she did receive an envoy representing Abe in early January.<sup>22</sup>

When Park paid a state visit to China from June 27 to 30, she was given, as the joint statement published by Xinhua stated, “a grand welcome and warm hospitality by the Chinese Government and people.”<sup>23</sup> But buried underneath the diplomatic language of “mutual respect” and in spite of substantive “specific action plans” pledging to “open a hot line between the foreign ministers” and establish a “Sino-ROK Joint Committee for People-to-People Exchanges,” was a classic formulation of Chinese ambidexterity:

The ROK side expressed worry at the DPRK’s continued nuclear testing, and explicitly stated that it will never recognize the DPRK’s possession of nukes in any circumstance. The two sides unanimously hold the view that nuclear weapon development seriously threatens peace and stability in Northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula, and the world. The two sides affirm that achieving *denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula* [emphasis added] and maintaining peace and stability there is in the common interest of all parties, and they unanimously agree to work for this.<sup>24</sup>

The above passage is noteworthy for the conspicuous absence of Chinese subject-object agreement. The first sentence omits altogether China's stance on North Korea's continued nuclear testing and its ever-growing nuclear arsenal. The second sentence fails to identify just whose nuclear weapons development "the two sides" are addressing; that is, whether or not the extended nuclear deterrence that the United States provides the ROK is also taken into account in this indictment. Just whom the Chinese have in mind as the greatest threat to the region and the world with its "nuclear weapons development," whether it is tiny North Korea or the gargantuan United States, is left unsaid. Above all, the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," a phrase that made its official international debut in the September 19, 2005 joint statement of the Six-Party Talks, means, in both North Korean and Chinese parlance, not only a nuclear-free DPRK, but more pointedly, the abrogation of the U.S.-ROK alliance and the dislodging of the U.S. nuclear umbrella from the ROK.<sup>25</sup> In issuing the above words in its joint statement, China maintained its strategic ambiguity on North Korea's nuclear weapons programs and the denuclearization of North Korea. The real question here is to what extent the ROK was aware of this duplicity and went along with it—or whether Park actually came away from the summit believing that Xi was ingenuous in staunchly opposing North Korea's nuclear weapons, as the above passage might, at first glance, suggest. By the ROK foreign ministry's self-congratulatory assessment of Park's visit as having opened a "new era in Korea-China ties," and in dubbing the summit a "trip of heart and trust," coming just two days after the visit, one may be forgiven for not being able to take a firm position on this question.

Furthermore, during the visit Park purportedly asked Xi to honor a Korean nationalist, Ahn Jung-geun, who shot to death Ito Hirobumi, a prominent Japanese leader, at a rail station in Harbin on October 26, 1909, by building a statue of Ahn at the station.<sup>26</sup> China not only obliged, but went considerably further and built a small-but-protective memorial hall over Ahn's statue, which opened on January 19, 2014. Japan condemned the memorial, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide claiming that South Korea and China were "banding together." Even before the opening of the memorial, Suga in November 2013 had called Ahn a "criminal," while warning against the tacit Sino-South Korean front against Japan, remarking that the construction of the memorial was "not helpful for Japan-South Korea relations."<sup>27</sup> Suga also unintentionally baited South Korea and China to strike back with the following provocative statement: "We recognize Ahn Jung-Geun as a terrorist who was sentenced to death for killing our country's first prime minister."<sup>28</sup>

Japan's labeling of Ahn, who is universally respected in South Korea, as a "terrorist" predictably prompted a prompt reply. Hong Moon-jong, secretary-general of the governing party retorted, "If Ahn Jung-geun was a terrorist, then Japan was a terrorist state for having mercilessly invaded and plundered countries around it," while Cho Tae-yong, foreign ministry spokesperson, called Suga's remarks "ignorant and anti-historical," adding that he could "not repress his astonishment."<sup>29</sup> Two days later, China entered the fray. Foreign ministry spokesperson Qin Gang, when asked to address the question of Ahn as a "terrorist," replied: "Ahn Jung-geun is, in history, an upholder of justice who fought against Japan's aggression. If Ahn Jung-geun were a 'terrorist,' what about the 14 Class A war criminals of WWII honored in the Yasukuni Shrine? If the establishment of the Ahn Jung-geun Memorial Hall were 'a tribute to the terrorist,' what about the Japanese leader's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine where Class A war criminals are enshrined?"<sup>30</sup>



Park's request to Xi to build a memorial in Ahn Jung-geun's honor, in both principle and historical viewpoint, may be irrefragable. But that the overture was made by the head of state of the Republic of Korea to the head of state of the People's Republic of China unnecessarily created the impression in Japan that the two were working in concert against Japan.<sup>31</sup> From South Korea's perspective, the request would best have come from a lower-level official instead of Park herself, for there will likely come a day when the convoluted and toxic nature of the triangular relations among Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing will prompt Park to seek Japan's support in advancing South Korea's interests vis-à-vis China. South Korea and China may be aligned by the common history of victimization by imperial Japan, but the formal task of remembrance, commemoration, and rectification of history, especially international history, is best left to historians and academics instead of heads of state.

## SOUTH KOREA'S PROPENSITY TO TILT TOWARD CHINA

Historically, Korea's most pressing need to find security within the context of trilateral relations with China and Japan came in a war, which tore Korean lives apart and devastated the Korean land. It touched the lives of the vast majority of Koreans. It was a war that saw Chinese troops cross the Yalu River and dramatically alter the fortunes on the battlefield, forcing their foes to remain largely confined to the southern half of the peninsula. At its end, all the major belligerents claimed victory, while no doubt remained as to who were its greatest victims. A major international war in Northeast Asia that shook the status quo in the region and presaged the contrasting vicissitudes of national fortune among the combatants, it was the *Imjin Waeran* of 1592-98, referred to in English as "Hideoyoshi's invasions"—the most spectacular manifestation of Korea-China-Japan triangular tensions in history.<sup>32</sup>

The parallels between this war and the Korean War of 1950-53 are striking. Although the two tragic events stand more than 350 years apart, from a Korean perspective, commonalities immediately draw attention: the leadership's vulnerability, ineptitude, and ignorance of the strategic environment in the lead-up to the war; its helplessness in the prosecution of the war and ceasefire negotiations; and new security challenges that enveloped the Korean Peninsula in the postwar era. Following Japan's invasions in the 1590s, Joseon Korea fell into a long period of decline, closing itself off for the next 300 years from foreign intercourse except with China and intermittent contact with Japan. The implications of this mindset and self-seclusion would be painfully felt in the early twentieth century, as Korea, unable to cope with the drastically different international order into which it was pulled, was colonized by Japan.

Even in the near term, the Korean monarchy, coming out of the *Imjin War*, found itself caught between a declining Ming China, to which it owed allegiance and debt,<sup>33</sup> and a new rising power in Manchuria that the Confucian Korean leadership regarded as barbarian. King Injo would "misread" the strategic environment and side with the Ming, while alienating the Manchus. The result was two devastating and humiliating Manchu invasions of Korea, the first in 1627 and the second in 1636. The latter Manchu campaign, in particular, has been dramatized into a morality play, a best-selling two-volume history by Han Myonggi. Its running theme is the critical need for South Korea today to choose sides wisely in the so-called "G-2 era."<sup>34</sup> The main message is that South Korea today is caught up in a shift in

the balance of power in the region and the world, with a rapidly rising China and a declining United States much in the same manner as the scene 400 years ago with the revisionist Manchus on the ascendance and the status quo power Ming in decline.

For North Korea, in the aftermath of the Korean War, its maritime neighbors, South Korea and Japan, and the world beyond the Pacific Ocean, effectively became a dead end. Both Joseon Korea in the seventeenth century and North Korea in the twentieth century turned inward, away from the ocean, and became the quintessential quasi-isolated continental state. The ramifications of such a terra-centric policy on the respective mentalities of the Korean leadership and conditions of life, respectively, of the people of Joseon and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, hardly require elaboration.

In contrast, South Korea, coming out of the Korean War, pursued a dramatically new course. Heavily depending on its patron the United States, it oriented itself toward the Pacific and the world beyond for the first time in Korean history. Its rise to maritime prominence as a major trading nation of the world captures the essence of the South Korean state today: a global leader in shipping, electronics, and a thriving democracy. Yet, as much as South Korea has benefitted from its dependent relationship with the United States and as much debt as it owes, the rapid rise of China over the past two decades has engendered an atavistic nostalgia for China in the traditional vassal state, a romantic attachment rooted in an abstract sense of cultural debt that Korea owes—even going back to Ming China's deliverance of Joseon. South Koreans largely remain unencumbered by the ghosts of history in having fought against the PRC in the Korean War or, in a marked contrast to complex feelings toward the United States, considerations of “flunkeyism” when viewing China today. “Flunkeyism” is a term often used by North Korea to deride South Koreans disposed toward “serving the great” (*sadaeju-ui*: 事大主意), which, in plain language, means being servile to the United States. For example, an article in the *Rodong Sinmun* last October charged, “Flunkeyism and dependence on foreign forces are an inveterate bad habit of the south [*sic*] Korean ruling quarters.”<sup>35</sup>

At the heart of the North's derision lies Korean ethnic nationalism, in particular, determination to be self-reliant and independent of external powers in shaping the future of the ethnic Korean nation.<sup>36</sup> Ethnic nationalism (*minjokjuui*: 民族主義) is hardly native or exclusive to Korea. However, in the Korean context, and particularly in the common lexical configuration *uri minkokgiri* (“by the Korean ethnic nation ourselves”), the term has an unmistakable connotation of Korean exceptionalism and exclusivity. This phrase is featured in the first article of the South-North Joint Declaration signed by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il at the 2000 Pyongyang summit signifying the spirit and method by which the Koreans will determine their future. The same Korean phrase transliterated slightly differently, *uri minzokkiri*, is the official name of a website run by the Committee for the Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland, a major arm of the North Korean propaganda machinery founded in 1961 under the auspices of the Workers' Party of Korea. Unmistakably, national identity politics resonate in both the North and the South, and in the latter, with particular force in the context of South Korea's asymmetrical relationship with the United States. Since Korea's liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945, the founding of the Republic of Korea in 1948, through America's deliverance of the ROK in the Korean War, to Seoul's ongoing dependent relationship with Washington today, ethnic nationalism has been a psychic force in South Korea's relationship with the United States.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to complex attitudes bordering on an inferiority complex toward Japan and the United States, which occasionally manifest themselves in large-scale, organized protests against these countries, contemporary attitudes toward China are characterized by relatively high tolerance for Chinese misdeeds against Korea—which suggests a misguided shade of superiority complex. For example, in April 2008, the Olympic torch relay through Seoul, on its way to the Summer Olympics in Beijing, triggered a violent clash between thousands of Chinese nationals and anti-Beijing South Korean and Tibetan human rights activists. In the melee, hundreds of Chinese, some armed with poles and pipes, were seen attacking Tibetans and their South Korean supporters, not to mention journalists and the South Korean riot police. Several chased the police into the lobby of the Seoul Plaza Hotel, an upscale hotel just across the street from City Hall, and repeatedly thrust their weapons at the police. This unusual infringement on South Korean sovereignty initially did trigger indignation and anti-Chinese commentary in the South Korean media and chat rooms.<sup>38</sup> But the anger and animosity were short-lived. The spectacle of thousands of Chinese nationals assaulting South Korean citizens, including the national police, in the South Korean capital in broad daylight certainly did not lead to any kind of organized political protest in front of the PRC embassy in Seoul or sustained civic movement against the Chinese government. Such apparent collective equanimity stands in contrast to the outpouring of indignation and massive demonstration at a far less serious contemporaneous case of perceived foreign infringement—that from the United States. South Korea’s resumption of the import of U.S. beef triggered widespread, unfounded fears of debilitating health implications from consuming U.S. beef, and widespread anger at both Seoul and Washington for colluding in this racket. Anger and ambivalence toward the United States unleashed massive protests that virtually shut down downtown Seoul for over two months,<sup>39</sup> while occasional news reports on questionable Chinese-produced foods—ranging from fake to tainted to harmful—entering the South Korean market have produced to date no such social movement. Even China’s provocative announcement on November 23, 2013, of an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), which impinges on South Korean jurisdiction, triggered no serious anti-Chinese rhetoric or protests, whereas such a declaration by Japan would most likely have resulted in a very different reaction in South Korea.

Were the public’s acute sensitivity to perceived U.S. or Japanese infringement and relative composure in the face of actual Chinese infringement not reflected in South Korea’s foreign policy, such phenomena may not merit attention in the context of South Korea’s international relations. However, South Korea’s latent attachment to China over the United States came close to becoming official policy, when President Roh, during a speech at the air force academy in February 2005 declared that South Korea would assume the role of “balancer” in Northeast Asia. Roh’s statement variously suggested an intermediary role for South Korea in the region, aligning with China against Japan, and checking U.S. strategic policy in the region by inching away from Washington and closer to Beijing. These concerns were confirmed in subsequent months by the Roh government’s repeated calls for an “independent military,” which would not be drawn into a conflict started by the United States, and decrease in military exchanges with Japan—as well as Roh’s “diplomatic war” statement in March—, while elevating military ties with China and vetoing even discussions with the United States of joint contingency operations in North Korea in the event of a change in the status quo in the North.<sup>40</sup> Roh’s “balancer” statement immediately drew criticism from the main opposition

party, with party leader Park Geun-hye assailing Roh's notion of taking a neutral, balancing role in the region while maintaining a strong alliance with the United States. "The role of a balancer is possible only when we have the power and capability, and other countries recognize us as a balancer. But China, Japan, Russia and even North Korea do not recognize us as a balancer," Park said in a speech at the National Assembly. She went on to warn: "If we break away from the alliance with the United States and isolate ourselves diplomatically, it will do no good for our national interest."<sup>41</sup> Criticism of Roh was not confined to his opposition party. Even Stephen Bosworth, former U.S. ambassador to South Korea and one not known for his immoderate views or undiplomatic remarks, warned that any attempt by South Korea to play the role of the "balancer" in the region would be to "punch above its weight class" and that if South Korea were "bent on pursuing that role," one could not rule out the possibility of "damaging the alliance."<sup>42</sup>

Needless to say, Park has not shown any inclination to align her nation with China to the detriment of the alliance with the United States. Park's bona fide pro-U.S. stance has never come into question, and it is all but an open secret that Washington was relieved and pleased by Park's election in December 2012. Neither has she made any remarks such as "What's wrong with being anti-American?" as Roh did during his bid for the presidency in 2002,<sup>43</sup> or stir up controversy during her visit to China as Roh did, upon being queried on the Chinese figures he most respects during a visit to China in 2003, "Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping."<sup>44</sup> It is also exceedingly unlikely that any former high-ranking U.S. official ever will come to call Park "anti-American" and "probably a little crazy," as former Defense Secretary Robert Gates did Roh in his memoir.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the controversies and strains in the ROK-U.S. bilateral relationship may be said to be confined to the Roh presidency. At the same time, the structural imperatives of the triangular relations among South Korea, Japan, and China favor China, at a cost to the U.S.-led trilateral quasi-alliance among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo, whenever friction between Seoul and Tokyo comes to the fore. As much as the Obama administration may sympathize with South Korea's indignation at the Abe administration for its frequent undiplomatic remarks and, in particular, Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine last December, it can only regard a South Korea that openly turns its back on Japan as a strategic liability, for any fissure among the three nations can only favor China's strategic interests. Furthermore, there is no question that since the Park-Xi summit, South Korea has far more actively pursued diplomacy with China than with Japan, in variety and degree, on issues ranging from negotiations on a free trade agreement, increased cooperation on international security issues, and cultural, humanities, and technological exchange programs. In particular, ROK national security chief Kim Jang-soo and Chinese State Counselor Yang Jiechi met in Seoul in mid-November and agreed to open strategic dialogue channels on diplomacy and security policies governing both countries. Meanwhile, South Korea and Japan held all of three open meetings between July and December, two of which addressed free trade agreement issues in a trilateral setting involving China.<sup>46</sup>

Since the early 1950s, the United States has intermittently played the role of intermediary between South Korea and Japan. The exigencies of the Korean War created a pressing need for it to seek to improve relations between Seoul and Tokyo. Washington arranged for the first bilateral meeting between the two nations during the war, in October 1951, in Tokyo. At the outset, the Korean delegate, Kim Young-shik, called for an apology from Japan

for its invasion and colonial rule of Korea. The meeting fell apart in acrimony.<sup>47</sup> In 1953, the United States arranged for another meeting between the two sides in Tokyo. Kubota Kanichiro, the Japanese delegate, told the Korean delegation that the United States violated international law in liberating Korea and establishing the ROK prior to concluding a peace treaty with Japan, in redistributing Japanese-held Korean properties to Koreans, and in repatriating Japanese nationals from Korea. Kubota also insisted that Koreans should be grateful for all the improvements made by Japan during the occupation of Korea, and that “Japan’s compulsory occupation of Korea...was beneficial to the Korean people.” Kubota also said the South Koreans were “servile to the powerful and high-handed to the weak,” adding that “efforts should be started to bring down” the South Korean administration of Syngman Rhee.<sup>48</sup> Kubota’s remarks reflected sentiments stated earlier by a member of the Diet, that “we refuse to stand in silence watching...Koreans...swaggering about as if they were nationals of victorious nations...it is most deplorable that those who lived under our law and order until the last moment of the surrender should suddenly alter their attitude to act like conquerors.”<sup>49</sup> No further meetings between Seoul and Tokyo took place until 1958.

The different strategic implications between South Korea’s strained relationship with Japan during the Cold War and today are apparent. In the former period, South Korea not only did not have diplomatic relations with China, but was, in view of its poverty and corresponding international standing, nothing resembling the key regional economic player that it is today. Until the 1980s, when the Japanese textbooks issue became a thorn in Sino-Japanese and South Korean-Japanese relations, South Korea’s apathy or even animosity toward Japan offered little strategic value to China, since Beijing’s leverage vis-à-vis Seoul was limited. China’s primary concern in its relationship with both South Korea and Japan for most of the Cold War era was the presence of U.S. troops in these countries. However, since the end of the Cold War and the normalization of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China in 1992, China has found a new economic means of pressuring South Korea, and, in recent years, has grown increasingly bold in sending that admonitory message to Seoul. For example, an editorial in the *Global Times* in July 2012 warned Seoul:

South Korea benefits from Chinese prosperity, and a rational South Korea should continue to play the role of a balancer in Northeast Asia. A military alliance between South Korea and Japan poses a potential threat to China. As a result, China should firmly oppose the move and try to persuade South Korea not to further its military alliance with Japan and the U.S.

Ahead of Obama’s visit to Japan and South Korea in late April, the United States has in recent months exhorted its two allies in Northeast Asia to improve relations and not exacerbate the situation.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Park and Abe held their first formal talks in a trilateral setting with Obama during the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague in late March.<sup>52</sup> This marked the first formal meeting between the leaders of South Korea and Japan since the trilateral meeting among Lee Myung-bak, Noda, and Hu Jintao in Beijing on May 14, 2012, which ended an unusually long lull in bilateral summit diplomacy between Seoul and Tokyo.

The triangular dynamics among South Korea, Japan, and China today favor China, principally due to the occasional fissure in the bilateral relationship between Seoul and Tokyo and Seoul’s propensity to hedge in its relationship with China and the United States,

whether on security issues like joining the U.S.-led missile defense system or on economic issues like joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).<sup>53</sup> The trilateral relations among the three nations today resemble less an equilateral or even an isosceles triangle, with equal distance maintained between Beijing and Seoul and between Beijing and Tokyo. Rather, they resemble more a scalene triangle with a fluctuating, but shorter, distance maintained between Beijing and Seoul than between Beijing and Tokyo.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEOUL-BEIJING-TOKYO TRIANGLE AND REGIONAL SECURITY

The trilateral relations among South Korea, China, and Japan cannot be properly considered outside the context of the long-term strategic competition between the United States and China and the growing ballistic missile and nuclear threat posed by North Korea. The United States, as the preeminent military power in the world, is unlikely to compromise its strategic goals of containing China and North Korea, the principal source of threat in Northeast Asia. To what extent its two allies in the region, Japan and South Korea, support U.S. policy objectives, will determine the nature of the Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo triangle in the near term.

On October 3, 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel laid a wreath at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery in Tokyo and paid their respects to unidentified Japanese war dead from the Pacific War. It was the first time that two U.S. cabinet ministers paid such homage in the postwar era as well as in the history of U.S.-Japan relations. This remarkable show of solidarity and resolve not to let “historical issues” mar the bilateral relationship would not have been possible without the mutual trust and genuine friendship built over the past 68 years on the shared values of democracy, the rule of law, free and open markets, and respect for human rights. This symbolic act was a statement that the United States recognized Japan as a global political power and a stalwart partner in facing the “complex regional security environment,” as mentioned in the meeting of the U.S.-Japan SCC in Tokyo on the same day. In simple terms, this environment means the challenges and threats posed by the “blood alliance” between China and North Korea.

The United States also expressed its support for Japan’s decision to establish its own National Security Council and contribute more proactively to maintaining both regional and global peace and security, welcoming Japan’s decision to review its legal procedures in order to exercise collective self-defense. In particular, the United States and Japan, for the sake of a “more robust Alliance and greater shared responsibilities,” decided to “expand security and defense cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond” by revising the 1997 Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation by the end of 2014.<sup>54</sup> This is a noteworthy development as it presumes Japan’s collective self-defense as a *fait accompli* and thereby implies Japan’s considerably expanded global security role in the future. This newly elevated alliance also means U.S. support for Japan’s right to missile interception. The two sides agreed to establish “a more interoperable and flexible force posture that enables side-by-side and agile contingency response” in order to counter challenges against security and international norms.

On his way to Japan, Hagel paid a visit to South Korea and met with Park. The meeting, according to *The New York Times*, came as “something of a shock.”<sup>55</sup> Instead of reviewing and confirming ways to jointly meet the security challenge from China and North Korea, Park “delivered a lecture about Japan’s ‘total absence of sincerity’ over the suffering that imperial Japan caused Korea in the last century and finished with a request of her own: that Washington force Tokyo to behave.”<sup>56</sup> As with Xi on the Ahn Jung-geun memorial, Park, in trying to rectify her nation’s history with Japan by appealing to a foreign statesman, was acting like an historian instead of a president. The contrast between Japan and South Korea must have been stark for the U.S. government. The United States and Japan fought a vicious war against each other, but the two nations do not preoccupy themselves with or bicker over “events of the past.” Instead, the two allies focus on meeting the security threat from the region, although neither faces a direct existential threat from either China or North Korea.

South Korea, on the other hand, does face a direct, if not an imminent, existential threat from North Korea, which China supports. Despite the recent thaw in inter-Korean relations, marked by the first vice-ministerial level talks between the two Koreas since 2007, which led to temporary reunion meetings between separated families, North Korea is bound to provoke the South again with a weapons test or even a direct, if not limited, attack. Since Kim Jong-un’s dramatic purge of his uncle, Jang Song-taek, in December 2013, the impression has spread in Seoul that the Kim regime may be unstable due to political intrigues compounded by internal stresses, and, as a result, the North is reaching out to the South for economic aid. This view does not fully take into consideration that demonstrative punishment of alleged offenders, along with their family and minions, has remained the key instrument of regime preservation throughout the state’s existence. Violent and pervasive purges were critical during the formative years under Kim Il-sung, following the disastrous outcome of the greatest gamble by the dynasty, the Korean War.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, when Kim Jong-il was attempting to consolidate his rule in the mid-1990s he sent tremors through the military establishment by executing hundreds of people suspected of planning a coup within the Sixth Army Corps.<sup>58</sup>

The latest purge in North Korea may not be a harbinger of any meaningful change for the better in that country. The drama surrounding Jang’s swift fall has triggered widespread speculation, ranging from instability and imminent coup, to popular uprising. Beyond doubt, the prolonged decay of the North Korean system, accentuated by a catastrophic famine in the mid- to late-1990s, has thoroughly disillusioned portions of the elite with their political system. But there is no reliable indication that the Kim regime is on the brink of a crisis or unable to govern. North Korea will soon enough return to its strategy of periodic provocations, and South Korea will once again see that China, despite its thinly veiled disdain for the leadership in Pyongyang, will go to extremes to defend it. China will refrain from taking action that may destabilize the Kim regime, despite signing onto UN Security Council resolutions purporting to punish Pyongyang.

South Korea should fully be aware that the recent “peace offensive” by Pyongyang is more likely a smokescreen before a provocation than a genuine overture seeking reconciliation. All states, to varying degree, practice strategic deception—or sending out mixed signals in order to mislead or deceive one’s adversary. North Korea has taken this to a lethal level. Blatant deception on the eve of a provocative act has been its mode of operation since at least 1950.

Just days before invading South Korea in June 1950, North Korea reached out to the South for high-level talks on unification. Kim Il-sung started the Korean War in order to complete the North Korean revolution, which remains the highest goal of the North Korean state today. It was a high-risk gamble, the biggest gamble by the Kim dynasty to date. In short, Kim needed to deceive his enemy with a smokescreen before he attacked.

On the eve of detonating a bomb at the Martyrs' Mausoleum in Rangoon, Burma on October 9, 1983, targeting President Chun Doo-hwan, North Korea asked China's help in conveying that it sought direct bilateral talks with the Reagan administration. Beijing gladly obliged, and the next day the bomb went off, killing 17 South Korean officials and four Burmese nationals. This was an important operation for Pyongyang, because the previous year Kim Il-sung had officially anointed his son, Jong-un, heir. The untested heir apparent needed to prove his military mettle against the despised South Korean head of state. Hence, the smokescreen was a crucial tactic in advancing Pyongyang's objectives.

On March 3, 2010, North Korea sought military talks with the South. On March 26, it torpedoed the *Cheonan*. On October 30 of that year, the two Koreas held their last family reunion meetings. On November 11, the North called for talks on Mt. Kumgang. On November 23, it shelled a South Korean island, killing four South Korean nationals. This was the crucial year for Kim Jong-un coming out, which he did by name in late September and, in person, standing next to his father on the reviewing stand at a military parade on October 10, Party Founding Day. The inexperienced heir, compelled to prove his military mettle, resorted to strategic deception before attacking the South in March and November of that year.

Kim Jong-un used the same tactic on the eve of his long-range missile test on December 12, 2012. On December 8, the North publicly extended its timeline to late-December for launching, as it said, a satellite into space. This led many North Korea watchers to speculate that it may be having second thoughts in the face of Chinese pressure. On December 10, the North stated that it was having "technical difficulties," prompting observers to assume that it was abandoning the planned launch. In this way, it caught many officials in Washington off-guard when it went ahead with the launch on the morning of December 12, exactly one week before the South Korean presidential election—a perfect window of opportunity to remind the South Korean public that it needs to be appeased.

The North's strategic objectives remain the same. Kim Jong-un may appreciate food, fertilizer, and other blandishments from the South, but he can live without them. Yet, what he does need is to raise the stakes yet again by reminding his neighbors that North Korea is a political factor with which they need to deal. Translated into plain language, that means provoke with another weapons test so that Kim's bigger neighbors will, after a decent interval following condemnatory pronouncements, go into damage-control mode and appease Pyongyang once again with negotiations and tacit acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear state.

In short, as the North has little to lose in canceling all talks and reverting to its strategy of provocations and limited attacks, it likely will do that again soon. When that time comes, Japan will reaffirm its alliance with the United States and strengthen its defense posture against North Korea. China will express its displeasure at Pyongyang in meaningless



diplomatic language such as “unacceptable” and “provocative,” while in actuality increasing aid to North Korea as it did in the aftermath of each of Pyongyang’s three nuclear tests to date. South Korea, in that fleeting moment of clarity, will see that Japan is actually a tacit ally and China an unstated foe.

## ENDNOTES

1. Alastair Gale, “In Seoul, Kim Jong Un Preferred to Shinzo Abe,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 2014.
2. See the “Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People’s Republic of China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” signed on July 11, 1961, in particular, Article II, which calls on both contracting parties to render immediate “military and other assistance by all means” in the event the other party is subjected to an “armed attack by any state or several states jointly.” China\_DPRK.htm, [http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china\\_dprk.htm](http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china_dprk.htm) (accessed Mar. 9, 2014). See also Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
3. For generous praise of Japan’s postwar success: “Japanese decisions have been the most farsighted and intelligent of any major nation of the postwar era even while the Japanese leaders have acted with the understated, anonymous style characteristic of their culture,” see Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 324. For an analysis of the alliance structure, see Victor D. Cha, *Alliance Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). While this chapter does not cast its arguments within any framework of international relations theory, its main approach is grounded in realism, according to which, as Cha notes on p.2, “states with common allies and common enemies should be friendly.”
4. See “Kim Jong-un ‘Masterminded Attacks on S. Korea,’” *Chosun Ilbo*, August 3, 2011, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2011/08/03/2011080300499.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/08/03/2011080300499.html) (accessed March 9, 2014). For a detailed account of the horrific conditions in the political prisoner concentration camps, see United Nations Human Rights Council, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea—A/HRC/25/CRP.1,” 208-245, released on February 17, 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/ReportoftheCommissionofInquiryDPRK.aspx> (accessed March 9, 2014). For a concise account of the prison camps, see Joshua Stanton and Sung-Yoon Lee, “World must awaken to North Korea’s camps of horror,” CNN.com, February 17, 2014 (updated), <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/07/opinion/lee-stanton-north-korea/> (accessed March 9, 2014).
5. Takeshi Kamiya and Daisuke Ikuta, “Lee’s Takeshima trip likely to undo Japan-South Korea progress,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, August 11, 2012, [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201208110060](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201208110060) (accessed March 9, 2014).
6. Choe Sang-Hun, *The New York Times*, August 10, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/world/asia/south-koreans-visit-to-disputed-islets-angers-japan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/world/asia/south-koreans-visit-to-disputed-islets-angers-japan.html?_r=0) (accessed March 9, 2014).
7. Mariko Oi, “South Korea’s Lee Myung-bak visits disputed islands,” BBC News, August 10, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19204852> (accessed March 9, 2014).
8. “Why Japan is angry over South Korea’s visit to an island,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 10, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2012/0810/Why-Japan-is-angry-over-South-Korea-s-visit-to-an-island> (accessed March 9, 2014).
9. In early March 2014 Japanese officials spoke of “reexamining” the Kono Statement, and Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se took the issue to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. See Sarah Kim, “Japan hedges on comfort women,” *JoongAng Daily*, March 8, 2014, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=2986030> (accessed March 9, 2014).
10. A senior Japanese policymaker told the author in December 2013: “It’s actually much easier to deal with the Chinese than the South Koreans, because at least the Chinese are rational.”

11. See Martin Faiola, "Island Comes Between South Korea and Japan," *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41813-2005Mar16.html> (accessed March 9, 2014).
12. Cho Bok-rae, "Roh Daetongryeong Ilbon jeongbu-ae danhohui sijeong yogu halgeot" [Roh to make firm demand of Japan to rescind action], *Yonhap News*, March 23, 2005, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=104&oid=001&aid=0000951221> (accessed March 17, 2014).
13. Min Seong-jae, "Roh sees 'diplomatic war' with Japan," World Security Network, March 24, 2005.
14. *Chosun Ilbo*, March 24, 2005.
15. "Clouds over Korea-Japan relations after Roh message," *The Korea Herald*, March 2, 2005, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=108&oid=044&id=0000049934> (accessed March 17, 2014).
16. Park Song-wu, "GNP Hits Roh's Diplomacy on Japan," *Korea Times*, March 24, 2005, <http://www.koreatimes.com/article/235225> (accessed March 17, 2014).
17. Park Yong-bae, "35% Jijui Uimi" [The meaning of 35% approval rating], *Jugan Hankook* [The Hankook Weekly], November 21, 2005, <http://weekly.hankooki.com/lpage/column/200511/wk2005112111172037660.htm#> (accessed March 17, 2005).
18. "Japan's Ambition to Grab Tok Islet Denounced in S. Korea," Korean Central News Agency, March 23, 2005, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2005/200503/news03/23.htm#7> (accessed March 17, 2014). The Korean Central News Agency followed up in subsequent days with denunciatory reports of its own: See "KCNA on Japan's Reckless Moves for Territorial Expansion," March 24, 2005; "Japan's Claim to Tok Islet Flayed," March 26, 2005; and "Japan's Claim to Tok Islet Slammed," March 29, 2005.
19. An editorial titled "Asia's Trilateral Trade Talks," in *The New York Times*, March 6, 2014, in calling for greater cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea, if only for the sake of economic interests governing the trilateral relations, states: "As for China, its rise is the world's big story. Under Mr. Xi's leadership, China is now inclined to demand special privileges, believing that it should be granted more deference by its neighbors. But it behooves Beijing's leaders to understand that China's expanding economic and military power cannot be sustained without deep engagement with the interdependent global economy." <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/opinion/asias-trilateral-trade-talks.html> (Accessed May 13, 2014).
20. Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," Congressional Research Service, December 28, 2010, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41043.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2014). For a short, recent summation of the bilateral relationship, see Jayshree Bajoria and Beina Xu, "The China-North Korea Relationship," Council on Foreign Relations, February 18, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/china/china-north-korea-relationship/p11097> (accessed March 18, 2014). For overall China-South Korea relations, see Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), in particular pp. 1-10. Chung argues, on p. 11, "South Korea faces a strategic conundrum concerning how it can maintain amicable relationships with both the United States and China, given that the former has no control whatsoever over the relationship between the latter two and that Sino-American relations possess many sources of serious friction."
21. See Kim Oi-hyun, "Park Geun-hye will send first special envoys to China," *The Hankyoreh* January 17, 2013, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/570129.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/570129.html) (accessed February 9, 2014).
22. Choe Sang-Hun, "Japanese Envoy Tries to Mend Ties with South Korea," *The New York Times*, January 4, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/05/world/asia/japanese-envoy-tries-to-mend-ties-with-south-korea.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/05/world/asia/japanese-envoy-tries-to-mend-ties-with-south-korea.html?_r=0) (accessed February 9, 2014).
23. See "China-South Korea issue joint statement on regional issues, 27 June 13," BBC Monitoring Newsfile (accessed March 9, 2014).
24. "China-South Korea issue joint statement on regional issues, 27 June 13."

25. Richard C. Bush and Jonathan D. Pollack, "North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions: Hiding in Plain Sight," Brookings, February 18, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/02/18-north-korea-nuclear-ambitions-bush-pollack> (accessed March 18, 2014). For a typical North Korean stand on this, see "Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the DPRK's Invariable Stand," Korean Central News Agency, September 29, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201309/news29/20130929-06ee.html> (accessed March 18, 2014); "South Korea's 'Strategic Rigidity' Obstructive to North-South Dialogue—Chinese Newspaper," Korean Central News Agency, June 1, 2011, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2011/201106/news01/20110601-26ee.html> (accessed March 18, 2014). For the variance in views of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula between Seoul and Beijing, see "Seoul, Beijing Agree on Denuclearized Korean Peninsula," Voice of America, June 27, 2013: "If we look at the official Chinese documents on denuclearization, what they mean is a denuclearization of the complete peninsula, not just North Korea," she [Dong Xiangrong] said, adding that, contrarily, South Korea is solely interested in preventing the North from developing nuclear weapons." <http://www.voanews.com/content/seoul-beijing-agree-on-denuclearized-korean-peninsula/1690379.html> (accessed March 18, 2014).
26. Jane Perlez, "China Exhibit, Part of an Anti-Japan Campaign, Reflects an Escalating Feud," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/world/asia/china-exhibit-part-of-an-anti-japan-campaign-reflects-an-escalating-feud.html> (accessed March 18, 2014).
27. Toko Sekiguchi, "Seoul, Beijing Find New Common Ground Against Tokyo," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/11/19/seoul-beijing-find-new-common-ground-against-tokyo/> (accessed March 18, 2014).
28. Emily Rauhala, "104 Years Later, a Chinese Train Station Platform is Still the Site of Anti-Japanese Rancor," *Time*, January 30, 2014, <http://time.com/2609/104-years-later-a-chinese-train-station-platform-is-still-the-site-of-anti-japanese-rancor/> (accessed March 18, 2014). Mr. Suga went on to say, "The co-ordinated move by China and South Korea based on a one-sided view [of history] is not conducive to building peace and stability," calling the memorial "extremely regrettable." See "Japan protest over Korean assassin Ahn Jung-geun memorial in China," BBC, January 20, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25808437> (accessed March 18, 2014). See also Gil Yun-hyung, "Japanese government voices disapproval of Ahn-Jung-geun memorial," *The Hangyoreh*, January 21, 2014, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/620717.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/620717.html) (accessed March 18, 2014).
29. "S. Korean ruling party executive calls Japan 'terrorist state' after hero criticized," *The Japan Times*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/21/national/s-korean-ruling-party-exec-calls-japan-terrorist-state-after-hero-criticized/#.Uyg97PI5MrU> (accessed March 18, 2014); Seo Jae-jun, "Jeongbu, 'Suga II Gwanbang Janggwan Baleon Gyutan'" [ROK condemns Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga's statement], News 1, January 20, 2014, <http://news1.kr/articles/1504015> (accessed March 18, 2014).
30. "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on January 22, 2014," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, January 22, 2014, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2535\\_665405/t1121675.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/t1121675.shtml).
31. Even during the Park-Xi summit in late June 2013, major daily newspapers like *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri*, *Sankei*, and *Nikkei* had all indicated such.
32. Samuel Hawley, *The Imjin War: Japan's Sixteenth-century Invasion of Korea and Attempt to Conquer China* (Seoul: The Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch, 2005), p. 563-86; Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), pp. 284-99.
33. Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, p. 285. Swope cites Gari Ledyard: "[O]ne is forced to conclude that for all the heroics and turtle-boats, it was the Chinese alliance that was the most crucial military element in Korea's survival." In the wake of North Korea's invasion in 1950, it was the "U.S. that was the most critical element in the Republic of Korea's survival."
34. Han Myonggi, *Byeongja horan* (Seoul: Pureun Yeoksa, 2013).

35. "Dependence on Foreign Forces will Lead to Ruin: Rodong Sinmun," Korean Central News Agency, October 22, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201310/news22/20131022-13ee.html> (accessed March 19, 2014). The next month, the KCNA even adopted sexism and further charged that Park Geun-hye "has to play the coquette with the U.S. and flatter it," and that the "Park group" are "political prostitutes and traitors." "Servile Attitude of Political Waiting Maid: News Analyst," Korean Central News Agency, November 12, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201311/news12/20131112-07ee.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).
36. What Gilbert Rozman terms "national identity" politics. In the context of contemporary Japanese foreign policy, see Gilbert Rozman, "A National Identity Approach to Japan's Late 2013 Foreign Policy Thinking," *The Asan Forum*, January 25, 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/a-national-identity-approach-to-japans-late-2013-foreign-policy-thinking/> (accessed March 18, 2014).
37. See David I. Steinberg, ed., *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005).
38. Kim Tae-jong, "Anti-Chinese Sentiment Looms After Torch Relay," *The Korea Times*, April 28, 2008, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2008/04/117\\_23257.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2008/04/117_23257.html) (accessed March 19, 2014).
39. Jack Kim, "Anti-U.S. beef protest draws 100,000 S. Koreans," Reuters, May 31, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/05/31/us-korea-protest-idUSSE021734120080531> (accessed March 19, 2014). "Clashes over U.S. beef in South Korea," CNN, June 2, 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/06/01/skorea.usbeef/index.html?eref=edition> (accessed March 19, 2014).
40. "Seoul's 'Balancing' Role," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2005, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB111748666613046386> (accessed March 19, 2014).
41. Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea's 'balancer' policy attacked," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/08/world/asia/08iht-seoul.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).
42. "Hanmi Gwangye Daedam: Gyunhyungja-yeok 'Hanguk Chyegeup' Neomeoseon II" ["Korea-U.S. Dialogue: Balancer Role Punching above 'Korea's Weight Class'"], *Chosun Ilbo*, April 18, 2005, [http://news.chosun.com/svc/content\\_view/content\\_view.html?contid=2005041870318](http://news.chosun.com/svc/content_view/content_view.html?contid=2005041870318) (accessed March 20, 2014).
43. Choe Sang-Hun, "Despair Overwhelmed Former South Korean Leader Embroiled in Scandal," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/world/asia/24roh.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed March 20, 2014).
44. Yang Sang-hoon, "Self Respect and the 50th Anniversary," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 15, 2003, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2003/07/15/2003071561006.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2003/07/15/2003071561006.html) (accessed March 19, 2014).
45. Lee Chi-dong, "In memoir, Gates calls ex-Korean President Roh 'crazy,'" *Yonhap News*, January 15, 2014, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2014/01/15/13/0301000000AEN20140115000100315F.html> (accessed March 20, 2014).
46. See Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "China-Korea Relations: Crying Uncle No More: Stark Choices for Relations," *Comparative Connections*, January 2014. Note in particular the chronology of China-Korea relations from September to December 2013 at the end of the article, [http://csis.org/files/publication/1303qchina\\_korea.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/1303qchina_korea.pdf) (accessed March 20, 2014).
47. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times: 1800 to the Present* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), p. 250.
48. Jun Sato, "Japanese official calls Seoul 'arrogant' in 1953 official document," *Asahi Shimbun*, June 19, 2013, [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201306190011](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306190011) (accessed March 20, 2014).
49. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times*, p. 250.
50. "S. Korea must stick to role of 'balancer,'" *Global Times*, July 3, 2012, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/7863524.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).
51. Lim Min-hyuk, "Obama, Naedal Sunbangeon Han Il Hwahwe Weonhae" ["Obama Seeks South Korea-Japan Rapprochement ahead of Visit Next Month"], *Chosun Ilbo*, March 17, 2014, [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2014/03/17/2014031700179.html?related\\_all](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/03/17/2014031700179.html?related_all) (accessed March 19 2014).

52. "South Korea, Japan leaders set to meet amid possibly thawing ties: media," Reuters, March 20, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/19/us-japan-korea-usa-idUSBREA2I0VX20140319> (accessed March 20, 2014).
53. On the first point, see Lee Chi-dong, "Missile defense dilemma dogging S. Korea," Yonhap News, October 25, 2013, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/10/25/13/0401000000AEN20131025000100315F.html> (accessed March 20, 2014). On the latter, see Jennifer Lind, "Between Giants: South Korea and the U.S.-China Rivalry," *The Atlantic*, July 19, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/07/between-giants-south-korea-and-the-us-china-rivalry/260060/> (accessed March 20, 2014).
54. "Joint Statement of Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee," October 3, 2013, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2013/10/20131003283979.html#axzz2wZ4VIJUY> (accessed March 20, 2014).
55. Martin Fackler and Choe Sang-Hun, "A Growing Chill Between South Korea and Japan Creates Problems for the U.S.," *The New York Times*, November 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/a-growing-chill-between-south-korea-and-japan-creates-problems-for-the-us.html> (accessed March 20, 2014).
56. Martin Fackler and Choe Sang-Hun, "A Growing Chill Between South Korea and Japan Creates Problems for the U.S."
57. See Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).
58. "Kim Jong Il's Bloody Purges," *Chosun Ilbo*, June 9, 2010, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2010/06/09/2010060900794.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/06/09/2010060900794.html) (accessed March 20, 2014).



# ASIA'S SLIPPERY SLOPE: TRIANGULAR TENSIONS, IDENTITY GAPS, CONFLICTING REGIONALISM, AND DIPLOMATIC IMPASSE TOWARD NORTH KOREA

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: GILBERT ROZMAN, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**

## ■ South Korea's Triangular Relations

**Japan-South Korea-U.S. Relations**  
*Sue Mi Terry*

**The Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo Triangle: Terra-centric Nordpolitik vs. Oceanic Realpolitik**  
*Sung-Yoon Lee*

**China-South Korea-U.S. Relations**  
*Gilbert Rozman*

**Russia, China, and the Korean Peninsula**  
*Valery Denisov and Alexander Lukin*

## ■ National Identity Approaches to East and South Asia

**Japan's National Identity Gaps: A Framework for Analysis of International Relations in Asia**  
*Gilbert Rozman*

**National Identity and Attitudes Toward North Korean Defectors**  
*Jiyeon Kim*

**Bridging the Chinese National Identity Gap: Alternative Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan**  
*Syaru Shirley Lin*

**Identity and Strategy in India's Asia-Pacific Policy**  
*Deepa M. Ollapally*

## ■ Divergence on Economic Regionalism

**Asia-Pacific Regional Economic Integration: U.S. Strategy and Approach**  
*Matthew P. Goodman*

**Japan and Regional Integration Dominoes: Golden Opportunity or Another Political Failure?**  
*Takashi Terada*

**Korean Bridge: Balancing Asian Economic Regionalism Between the United States and China**  
*Jin Kyo Suh*

**China's Choice: To Lead or to Follow on Asian Economic Integration**  
*Zhang Xiaotong*

## ■ New Thinking on Diplomacy Toward North Korea

**South Korea's Search for a New Diplomatic Strategy Toward North Korea; Trustpolitik as a Goldilocks Approach?**  
*Shin-wha Lee*

**What to Do about North Korea**  
*Mark Fitzpatrick*

**Purge of Jang Song-Taek and its Impact on China's Policy Toward North Korea**  
*Zhu Feng and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga*