

COUNCIL *on*
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

DISCUSSION PAPER

The Korean Pivot: Seoul's Strategic Choices and Rising Rivalries in Northeast Asia

Scott A. Snyder, Darcie Draudt, and Sungtae “Jacky” Park
February 2017

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher dedicated to being a resource for its members, government officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries. Founded in 1921, CFR carries out its mission by maintaining a diverse membership, with special programs to promote interest and develop expertise in the next generation of foreign policy leaders; convening meetings at its headquarters in New York and in Washington, DC, and other cities where senior government officials, members of Congress, global leaders, and prominent thinkers come together with CFR members to discuss and debate major international issues; supporting a Studies Program that fosters independent research, enabling CFR scholars to produce articles, reports, and books and hold roundtables that analyze foreign policy issues and make concrete policy recommendations; publishing *Foreign Affairs*, the preeminent journal on international affairs and U.S. foreign policy; sponsoring Independent Task Forces that produce reports with both findings and policy prescriptions on the most important foreign policy topics; and providing up-to-date information and analysis about world events and American foreign policy on its website, CFR.org.

The Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional positions on policy issues and has no affiliation with the U.S. government. All views expressed in its publications and on its website are the sole responsibility of the author or authors.

For further information about CFR or this paper, please write to the Council on Foreign Relations, 58 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10065, or call Communications at 212.434.9888. Visit CFR's website, www.cfr.org.

Copyright © 2017 by the Council on Foreign Relations® Inc.
All rights reserved.

This paper may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form beyond the reproduction permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law Act (17 U.S.C. Sections 107 and 108) and excerpts by reviewers for the public press, without express written permission from the Council on Foreign Relations.

Introduction

As U.S.-China tensions intensify and as the North Korean threat grows, the importance of the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) as a pivot state in East Asia and as a valuable ally for the United States has become clearer than ever. China is becoming a more assertive power in Asia. In addition, the North Korean nuclear and missile threat continues to grow and has become a concrete danger to Japan and South Korea, and possibly to the United States. Most U.S. and South Korean officials and experts now believe that Pyongyang has the capability to mount its warheads on medium-range missiles to possibly strike neighboring countries in Northeast Asia, although questions remain about the reliability of the regime's reentry technology. North Korea also continues to pursue the capability to strike the continental United States with nuclear-tipped missiles. With these developments, South Korea's strategic choices will matter more than ever.

Yet the U.S.-ROK alliance faces a period of uncertainty. In the United States, President Donald J. Trump has stated that South Korea should shoulder a greater burden for its own defense. During his 2016 campaign, Trump even suggested that South Korea might be better off if it developed its own nuclear weapons. In South Korea, President Park Geun-hye, who was seen as a strong ally of the United States and a steady leader willing to stand up to North Korea while pursuing pragmatic diplomacy with Japan and China, has been suspended from office by the South Korean national assembly after being implicated as an accomplice in the criminal investigation of her close friend, Choi Soon-sil. The resulting vacuum has paralyzed South Korean political leadership while the nation awaits elections for a new president. As a result, issues such as the deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system are being politicized as parties prepare for a presidential election, set to take place anytime between spring and December 2017. Such developments have intensified an already vigorous debate about South Korea's future strategic choices on a wide array of issues, including the alliance with the United States and the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Given this uncertain strategic environment, it is critical that U.S. policymakers understand South Korea's geopolitical position in the context of the reemergence of great power rivalries in Northeast Asia and the acute constraints on South Korea's foreign policy and strategic options. For the United States to effectively manage rising regional tensions, South Korea's ability to deftly navigate Northeast Asia's rivalries and coordinate with the United States and regional partners will be critical. Simultaneously, the United States and South Korea will need an even closer alliance and improved multilateral cooperation to deal with the North Korean threat and to prepare for any scenario of instability in North Korea. To such ends, South Korea should seek continued good relations with both the United States and China while promoting regional cooperation to reduce great power tensions. For its part, the United States should work with South Korea to maintain a strong but flexible alliance and to support its efforts to bridge regional differences without forcing the country into a coalition against a rising China.

Great Power Competition in Northeast Asia

Tensions among major powers are intensifying in Northeast Asia.¹ U.S. entanglements in the Middle East and the Great Recession have exhausted the American public and given rise to the perception around the world that U.S. commitment to maintaining the liberal international order is declining. At the same time, China is building a modern military and has taken a more assertive approach to foreign affairs. Chinese actions have induced anxiety among other Asian countries, causing them to draw closer to the United States.² Japan remains the world's third-largest economy; has a highly disciplined, trained, and technologically sophisticated navy; and is seeking to revise its constitution to enable a more active role in defending against potential threats from China and North Korea. South Korea, too, has substantial conventional military capabilities while the North has been investing heavily in asymmetric capabilities, most notably in expanded missile and nuclear weapons capabilities. The United States has committed to prioritize its military, diplomatic, and economic role in the region as part of its rebalance to Asia.

The rise of these tensions has led to comparisons between contemporary Northeast Asia and Europe prior to the outbreak of World War I. One similarity is that China, a rising land power, is a potential regional hegemon in Asia, as Germany, the leading land power in Europe, was before World War I. In response to Germany's rise, France and Russia formed an alliance, while Britain saw Germany as a threat to its maritime dominance. Currently, India, Japan, and Vietnam, as well as Australia, are all strengthening ties with one another and with the United States, although they have yet to establish a regional alliance. Because of this trend, China is concerned that it is becoming encircled, as the Germans feared a two-front war before World War I.

Another similarity is that East Asia is roiled by nationalism, as was Europe before 1914. Territorial disputes, such as those over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands or in the South China Sea, have become flash points, and differences over World War II-related historical issues have become controversial. Before World War I, the French had serious grievances regarding Alsace-Lorraine, which was lost to the Germans during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71. For Russia, the humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War was a major factor underlying its decision to take a tough stance against Germany during the July crisis of 1914 that set off World War I.³

Moreover, Northeast Asia could potentially face an unmanageable crisis in the form of instability on the Korean Peninsula, just as the European powers faced an unmanageable crisis spurred by contested territories and nationalistic sentiments in the Balkans. Before World War I, the Austro-Hungarians, Germans, and Russians all feared a potential power shift in the Balkans. The Austro-Hungarians feared that the Serbians would subvert and destabilize the multiethnic empire; the Germans feared that such a scenario would lead to encirclement by Russia and its allies; the Serbians feared that the Austro-Hungarians were intent on crushing the dream of a greater Serbia; and the Russians were riled by eastward expansion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Each side saw the situation as a zero-sum game and allowed differences to escalate into war in response to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. Some policymakers and experts fear that an internal crisis in North Korea could trigger similar chaos in Northeast Asia.

There are, of course, differences between today's situation and that of 1914. One relates to geography. Pre–World War I European tensions took the form of a continental conflict, with Germany and Russia as the two dominant land powers. The Germans, fearing a two-front war against France and Russia, felt compelled to take offensive actions to prevent the deterioration of their strategic environment.⁴ Unlike Germany then, however, China now is the only dominant land power in Asia, secured by its large distance from other countries and its natural buffers, including the Himalayas, which help prevent large-scale conflicts with India. Except for Korea, Asia is primarily an open maritime theater dominated by the U.S. Navy.⁵ Because the task of building a capable navy is expensive and difficult, China's ability to project power has remained limited. Thus, Asia's geography makes the region more stable compared to pre–World War I Europe.

In addition, China and the United States have nuclear weapons, while Japan and South Korea are effectively threshold nuclear weapons states—that is, either country could quickly produce nuclear weapons if they deemed it necessary. Nuclear deterrence, while it could lead to crises, could ultimately succeed in preventing states from plunging into war because of the destructive potential of nuclear weapons. Yet the history of nuclear weapons is relatively short, and only a handful of states have them. It is hard to conclude, based on this limited history, whether nuclear weapons deter conflicts.

The similarities and differences between Korea's contemporary strategic environment and pre–World War I Europe indicate that while Northeast Asia has the potential to experience dangerous crises, it is also more stable. Among great powers in the region, the Korean Peninsula remains the only major flash point on land. As one of the two states occupying the peninsula, South Korea faces strategic choices that could greatly affect the dynamic of potential conflict in Northeast Asia.

SOUTH KOREA'S ROLE IN NORTHEAST ASIA'S GREAT POWER POLITICS

If regional tensions worsen, South Korea's significance as a strategic pivot and a middle power would likely grow. Korea has historically been at the center of conflict whenever a great power competition has emerged in the region: a continental power could use it as a platform for invading a maritime power such as Japan, or a maritime power could use Korea as a beachhead to invade the rest of mainland Asia. Hence, South Korea's location and capacity make the country a significant factor in the balance of power among the region's major players. As late South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun observed, "Depending on what choice [Koreans] will make in future, the power structure in Northeast Asia will change."⁶ Roh might have exaggerated South Korea's influence in proposing his "balancer" concept at the time, but he was correct in his assessment of South Korea's geostrategic importance.

On the Korean Peninsula, two rival states are caught in an existential struggle and are tied to great power allies, the United States and China. The Kim Jong-un regime fears that the United States and South Korea are intent on destabilizing and bringing about regime change in North Korea, while the Chinese fear that such a scenario would lead to further encirclement by the United States and its allies. Many South Koreans distrust China and have concerns about whether China would impede the creation of a unified Korea in the event of North Korea's collapse. The United States is concerned about threats posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons. In this context, the likelihood of effective

cooperation to manage a peaceful and satisfactory outcome on the peninsula could decline if regional tensions continue to grow.

In recent years, there have been a number of major indications of mounting competition on the Korean Peninsula. During the summer of 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited South Korea before the North and made a public speech at Seoul National University in an apparent attempt to draw Seoul away from Washington.⁷ The controversy over the joint U.S.-ROK decision to deploy the THAAD system has also revealed the extent of China's sensitivities regarding South Korea in the United States' rebalance policy.⁸ The Chinese see THAAD as the forward component of a broader missile defense architecture that could erode China's nuclear deterrent and turn what they perceive as a strictly anti-North Korea alliance into a trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK regional alliance aimed at containing China.⁹ In addition, U.S. policymakers hope South Korea will take a tougher stance against China on South China Sea disputes. As a result, many South Koreans see their country as being caught in a tug-of-war between Washington and Beijing.

Historically, Korea has tended to side with the most powerful state in Asia. Until the end of the nineteenth century, China, for the most part, was East Asia's hegemon. Following independence from Japan after World War II, and in the context of the Cold War, South Korea turned to the United States. Debates among South Korean political elites have vacillated between dependence on the U.S. alliance and the desire to pursue more autonomy. Today, South Korea is hedging against China's rising influence by strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance while developing friendly ties with China to prepare for a possible U.S. retrenchment.

Strategic debates among South Koreans in the coming years will center on whether staying with their default foreign policy of a close alliance with the United States will help or hinder peace and security in Asia. While the overall dynamics in the region will greatly depend on the state of U.S.-China relations, South Korean choices will also matter.

South Korean Foreign Policy: Interests, Constraints, and Variables

Understanding South Korea's strategic options requires an analysis of the primary interests, constraints, and variables that influence its national strategy. First, South Korea has an interest in deterring and defending against the North Korean threat, which is the country's most immediate security concern. Second, South Korea is concerned with how to minimize fallout from competition between the United States and China or between China and Japan. Third, because South Korea's economy depends on exports (approximately half of its gross domestic product [GDP]) and imports (notably, energy from the Middle East), South Korea has an interest in expanding its trade on favorable terms and in protecting its maritime trade routes.¹⁰ Last, but not least, as a divided nation, South Korea has an ideological interest in national unification.

Yet, when it comes to satisfying its interests, South Korea faces a number of acute constraints. First, the North Korean nuclear threat continues to grow. U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials believe the Kim regime is now capable of mounting a warhead on its medium-range Nodong missiles (striking distance of 1,000 to 1,500 kilometers), is working to further miniaturize warheads to fit them on short-range missiles (with ranges of 500 kilometers and under), and is developing submarine-launched ballistic missiles, intermediate-range ballistic missiles (with ranges between 2,500 and 4,000 kilometers), and intercontinental ballistic missiles (with ranges possibly up to 12,000 kilometers).¹¹ In addition, Seoul's proximity to North Korea has meant that the city and its surrounding area, where approximately half of South Korea's population lives, have always been vulnerable to North Korean artillery strikes. South Korea cannot help but prioritize the task of protecting itself against North Korean aggression, while the aspiration to achieve national unification will depend more on North Korea's domestic situation than on South Korea's actions. Second, South Korea faces the risk of being caught in conflicts involving the world's first-, second-, and third-largest economies—the United States, China, and Japan. Third, South Korea's trade-dependent economy means the country's economic prospects rely heavily on international market forces, limiting its ability to meaningfully respond. South Korea needs the global economy—especially China's economy—to function properly to absorb Korean goods; it also needs the U.S. Navy to protect global trade routes.

A number of variables will influence these constraints and, as a consequence, South Korea's strategic choices. These variables include the state of the U.S.-ROK alliance, China's reemergence and the return of regional rivalry, the issue of unification, and South Korea's level of trade dependency.

THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

The level of South Korea's confidence in the alliance with the United States is the most important variable influencing Seoul's strategic choices. Close cooperation with the United States effectively addresses many of South Korea's problems: it has deterred North Korea, given Seoul leverage with Beijing, protected South Korean trade routes, and provided access to U.S. consumers, technology, and investment. Yet the price of the alliance has been that South Korea has had to closely align its interests with those of the United States and forgo a more autonomous foreign policy. South Korean

policymakers, academics, and the public consistently debate how much they can or should depend on the United States. The perceived reliability and utility of the alliance going forward will affect South Korea's strategic calculations.

While the alliance is currently strong, U.S. commitment to the long-term defense of South Korea has been questioned periodically. For example, Syngman Rhee, South Korea's first president, feared abandonment and attempted to maintain the U.S. commitment by threatening to start another war on the Korean Peninsula. During the 1970s, then President Park Chung-hee sought to build nuclear weapons in response to what he perceived to be a U.S. move toward abandoning South Korea. The recent U.S. presidential campaign generated anxiety in South Korea by opening a debate over the reliability of the U.S. commitment to South Korea, raising the possibility that South Korea may need to assume greater responsibility for its own defense.

At the same time, South Koreans have occasionally feared that the alliance might entrap them in an unwanted conflict between China and the United States. In the mid-2000s, the United States sought greater "strategic flexibility" for U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). The proposal was designed to change USFK from a deterrent force vis-à-vis North Korea to a "regional contingency force."¹² This was opposed by both South Korean conservatives and progressives, who feared either desertion or entrapment due to U.S. involvement in out-of-area conflicts. They argued that if U.S. forces based in South Korea entered into a conflict with China, Beijing might retaliate by targeting South Korea. The dispute resulted in an uneasy compromise: a January 2006 joint statement, which noted that South Korea "respects the necessity for strategic flexibility of the U.S. forces in the ROK" and that the United States "respects the [Republic of Korea's] position that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people."¹³

CHINA'S REEMERGENCE AND THE RETURN OF REGIONAL RIVALRY IN EAST ASIA

China's rapid economic growth has fueled its rise but also generated anxieties among its neighbors as a result of a shifting distribution of power within East Asia in China's favor. At the same time, Japan is seeking to loosen itself from postwar constraints on the use of its military and is working to become a more "normal" nation by pursuing greater flexibility in how it is able to use its self-defense forces and by seeking to develop more diverse capabilities. The extent of China's growth and whether it emerges as a revisionist or a status-quo power, along with Japan's normalization, are important variables likely to affect South Korea's choices.

China's economic growth rose to 14.2 percent in 2007 but slowed to 6.7 percent in 2016 and will likely continue to slow gradually.¹⁴ If China's relatively robust growth continues, South Korea will have to decide how to maintain security through its alliance with the United States while dealing with China's rising influence. More important, the degree to which Beijing will seek to either modify or even overturn existing international arrangements will influence Seoul's strategic choices. China has benefited from the existing U.S.-led world order but seeks to modify (if not overturn) it to better accommodate its own interests, to the consternation of many American observers. Many U.S. and South Korean observers debate the extent to which China wants to work within the current world order and the extent to which China seeks to change it. If China becomes more of a revisionist power with policies that clash with U.S. interests, South Korea's position could become more difficult. Initial confrontational statements and actions regarding China during the U.S. presidential transition suggest that tensions between Washington and Beijing may grow.¹⁵ If China becomes a partner in

upholding the existing international order or if Chinese economic growth markedly slows over the next five years, these tensions will subside and the regional environment could be less volatile.

A related variable that South Koreans are watching closely is the evolution of Japanese security policy in response to China's rise. Japan currently spends only about 1 percent of its GDP on defense and is, in principle, limited to having a force focused on defensive capabilities. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been working to turn the country into a more normal nation that does not have any constraint on the extent of its military capabilities or the degree of flexibility in the way military force is used, even if the process of normalization has been slow. For example, Japan is now able to participate fully in collective self-defense as an equal partner to directly assist the United States in case the latter is attacked.¹⁶ If Japan were to emerge as a nation capable of securing its own defense, it would bolster its already highly capable navy and would increase its capability to influence regional relations.

THE ISSUE OF UNIFICATION

The degree of stability of the North Korean regime is a variable that will affect South Korean strategic choices. National unification has been a consistent South Korean objective that, if fulfilled, would radically alter and potentially broaden the country's strategic options.

Korean unification, however, might not be a smooth and peaceful process that follows the model of German unification, which occurred at the nadir of Soviet power, when the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, was committed to a peaceful outcome. In addition, the income gap between East and West Germany was not as wide as the current gap between the Koreas.¹⁷ China is also becoming more assertive in Northeast Asia. Therefore, any Korean unification scenario will need to reflect on how different regional powers might respond to such an event. Unification could potentially destabilize the regional order in an unpredictable manner, given Korea's strategic importance. Moreover, the process by which unification occurs would influence South Korea's strategic options. If unification occurs in a messy manner, for example through interventions by major powers, and if South Korea is unable to manage the process, a unified Korea could become a constant source of instability or a country preoccupied with internal problems. North Korea's demonstrated advancements in its nuclear weapons and missile programs could also present a new challenge during any unification process, as the United States and South Korea would have to cope with the issue of how to deal with loose nuclear weapons in the event of North Korean instability. Furthermore, estimates of the cost of unification range as high as \$2.7 trillion.¹⁸

Additionally, the process of national unification will likely transform South Korea's domestic politics in unpredictable ways. The population of North Korea is approximately 25 million, half that of South Korea. North Koreans have had a vastly different national history than South Koreans for more than six decades. Integration of these two groups will require careful planning that will draw much of the unified Korea's attention inward. No one knows how northern Koreans would think or vote, or what the effect on regional relations of a unified Korea might be. The degree to which external major powers help or impede the process of unification will affect South Korea's strategic orientation: relations with those that help will likely strengthen, while relations with those that seek to impede will likely deteriorate.¹⁹

The most important change would be that the most dangerous threat and constraint to South Korea would have disappeared. The heavily militarized border with North Korea would disappear,

and the new state would share a land border with China about two hundred miles from Seoul. Once national reintegration is achieved, a unified Korea would be able to devote greater resources and attention to broader regional issues. Korea would then have to decide how to orient itself in an ever more complex strategic environment.²⁰

SOUTH KOREA'S TRADE DEPENDENCY

Another variable influencing South Korea's strategic options is the level of its trade dependency. South Korea's dependence on exports has made its economy vulnerable to external shocks, but the country's economic success also means that its political leadership is deeply interested in maintaining a liberal economic system that promotes market efficiency, transparency, and dispute resolution based on the rule of law. In recent times, China's integration into the global economic order has been an enormous boon for South Korea. Nevertheless, this dependence on China means that as the Chinese economy has slowed, so has the South Korean economy. Chinese companies are also competing with their South Korean counterparts, sometimes through unfair practices that have undercut South Korean companies on price, and have copied or stolen South Korean designs. South Korea's ability to shift its economy away from heavy dependence on trade to domestic consumption will influence its strategic options. Less dependence on trade could mean a country that is more flexible in the conduct of its foreign policy, particularly in regard to China.

South Korea's Options in Northeast Asia's Geopolitical Rivalry

If a hegemonic power reemerges in Northeast Asia, South Korea would have no choice but to align itself with that regional hegemon, as it has historically done. However, Northeast Asia today has more than one great power. The United States, although the most powerful nation, is not hegemonic, and the U.S.-China competition is intensifying. South Korean policymakers, politicians, and experts constantly debate how Seoul should navigate its foreign policy between Washington and Beijing. However, South Korea also has greater latitude to chart its own course precisely because of this uncertainty. As the late Michael I. Handel, a professor at U.S. Naval War College, noted about times of strategic uncertainty, "The importance of the weak states rises, and the powers are willing to pay a higher price for collaboration and friendship," increasing the strategic options for a secondary state.²¹ Under the current circumstances, South Korea may pursue options from a menu of strategies that includes hedging, accommodation, balancing, neutrality, regionalism, and networking. Moreover, South Korea's choices are not mutually exclusive, and are likely to evolve over time based on particular issues, circumstances, and perceptions of East Asia's strategic environment. This means that, to varying degrees, all of these strategies are intermingled as options for South Korea, depending on the specific circumstances it faces.

HEDGING

Hedging is currently South Korea's preferred strategic option. Hedging involves efforts by South Korea to remain on good terms with China while maintaining a strong alliance with the United States. To implement such a strategy, Seoul attempts to maintain a strong alliance with Washington but also avoid joining U.S.-led initiatives that would seriously antagonize Beijing. When U.S. and Chinese initiatives collide, South Korea seeks to avoid choices or to delay a final decision. For instance, South Korea might continue to support and reinforce the U.S.-led world order through global, multilateral efforts to improve development, climate change, nuclear security, maritime security, and other nontraditional security areas, and by pushing for closer coordination within the framework of the U.S.-ROK alliance. At the same time, South Korea might seek to avoid taking a stand on issues pertaining to the East and South China Seas and stay away from U.S.-led regional missile defense initiatives or other issues on which China holds strong positions. This strategy is designed to keep Seoul out of the crosshairs of both Washington and Beijing. Hedging is a flexible strategy because it does not force South Korea to choose one side or the other and leaves space for the country to maneuver. Furthermore, continued close relations with China help South Korea deal with the North Korean threat.

Yet hedging might eventually become unsustainable. As U.S.-China competition intensifies, the United States would likely ask South Korea to take a tougher position against Chinese revisionism and would push South Korea toward closer U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral defense cooperation, while China would more actively oppose the U.S.-ROK security cooperation that it perceives as being tar-

geted against Chinese interests. Maintaining a healthy U.S.-ROK alliance in which participants accommodate each other's interests will generate greater pressures on South Korea to endure frictions in relations with China.

ACCOMMODATION

South Korea could choose to alter its strategy and accommodate China's rise by deferring to China's requests and preferences and by forming closer political, economic, and military ties with China. This option would entail loosening or lessening South Korea's ties with the United States in an attempt to enhance prospects for accommodation with China. Evidence that South Korea is pursuing a policy of accommodation toward China would include South Korean efforts to drastically reduce or remove U.S. troops and military assets from the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, Seoul would establish closer military-to-military ties with Beijing while gradually aligning South Korea's foreign policy with China's, including efforts to challenge what China perceives to be a U.S.-dominated world order.

This option would be predicated on the assumption that China will indeed be the next hegemon in Asia; South Korea would essentially be choosing to side with the presumptive winner of the U.S.-China competition. Yet, given China's slowing economic growth and internal problems and the fact that the country continues to face competition with other powerful regional actors, the prospect that China will become the next hegemon in Asia is not assured. In addition, China does not have the naval power to protect South Korea's trade routes and does not share common liberal democratic values with South Korea. It is also not clear that Beijing would come to Seoul's aid in case of a North Korean attack, particularly given that China continues to uphold a mutual defense treaty with North Korea. Based on China's handling of illegal Chinese fishing in South Korean territorial waters, it is also not clear that a dominant China would respect South Korean interests in any way. Last but not least, moving to side with China would not inoculate South Korea against losses in the event of rising U.S.-China competition.

BALANCING

South Korea could choose to join U.S.-led efforts to balance against China's rise by strongly opposing Chinese encroachment in the East and South China Seas, joining in freedom of navigation patrols, and increasing trilateral security cooperation with Japan and the United States to uphold the regional order—perhaps even forming a trilateral alliance—among other measures. The objective would be to join with the United States and other U.S. allies in an attempt to force China to play by the rules of the existing international order by standing up to Beijing and showing that infringing on the current international norms has its costs.

However, this scenario could result in Seoul losing Beijing's support in dealing with Pyongyang. Moreover, a tougher South Korean stance against China could exacerbate regional tensions, given the Korean Peninsula's historical importance to China and China's fears of encirclement by U.S. allies. There would be heightened risk associated with this strategy if China were to become powerful enough militarily to mount a serious challenge against the United States and its allies in the western Pacific. History offers Koreans a lesson in this regard: during the power transition between the Ming and the Manchu dynasties in the seventeenth century, Korea's Joseon dynasty sided with the

declining Ming; the Manchus invaded and subjugated the kingdom.²² Similarly, if South Korea became the frontline state in a coalition against China, it would bear the brunt of the consequences of a U.S.-China conflict, just as South Korea suffered when the Korean War became the first military conflict of the Cold War. Furthermore, balancing China through cooperation with the United States and Japan requires one to assume that the combined might of the United States, Japan, and South Korea would be sufficient to curb Chinese revisionism and the North Korean threat. There is no knowing whether such balancing against China would succeed, but the price of being wrong would be costly.

NEUTRALITY

South Korea might pursue neutrality, which would involve the country refusing to align with its neighbors or with the United States in hopes that it could avoid being ensnared in great power conflicts. Scholar Robert L. Rothstein, in his major work on small powers, writes: “The possibility of withdrawing from the struggles between the Great Powers, and of enjoying a period of years devoted to peace and internal development, is the eternal myth for most Small Powers.”²³ Nevertheless, there are doubts about the viability of such a strategy. Maintaining neutrality is difficult and could ultimately lead South Korea to be without any concrete guarantees of security or adequate means to defend itself. The neutrality option would only work in the absence of great-power competition. When great powers compete, they have strong incentives to draw a neutral state into their respective coalitions to gain advantage. Given that U.S.-China competition is intensifying, neutrality does not seem feasible for South Korea, particularly because of the Korean Peninsula’s strategic location. In a case of severe U.S.-China competition, Seoul could be forced to choose sides or potentially face serious consequences. Moreover, without the alliance with the United States, the task of deterring and defending against North Korean threats would become more difficult. China would likely disregard and encroach on South Korean interests, for example, by forcing the ROK to allow the Chinese to fish in South Korean waters.

South Korea could pursue neutrality by acquiring nuclear weapons; it has the capacity to go nuclear quickly if it so chooses.²⁴ However, for South Korea, which is geographically small, the threshold for using nuclear weapons would be quite high, since an adversary’s retaliatory strike with even a few nuclear weapons could destroy the Seoul metropolitan area. South Korean nuclear weapons might deter an all-out invasion or a nuclear strike by Pyongyang or Beijing. Nevertheless, there are many grades of limited provocations, and Seoul would not want to risk committing suicide by mutual nuclear exchanges to deter and defend against all of them. North Korea has already shown its willingness to pursue limited provocations, for example, in the Yellow Sea in areas adjacent to its territory, without escalating to a large-scale military conflict. The North Koreans have even gone so far as to sink a South Korean warship, *Cheonan*, in 2010. It is difficult to imagine how nuclear weapons would help South Korea deter or defend against attacks of such scale. To deter and defend against a wide range of limited threats, South Korea requires conventional military capabilities commensurate with those of its adversaries. South Korea has the capacity to do so against North Korean threats, but South Korea does not have conventional capabilities that can match those of China. Therefore, possessing nuclear weapons would not necessarily make South Korea secure or viable as a neutral nation.

Alternately, South Korea could maintain an equilibrium among great powers by playing them off one another. This strategy is the riskiest but often the most favored for a small power historically because of “the vision of a perfectly even balance in which the weight of the Small Power might be decisive—the thought of sitting astride the fulcrum of a level balance and determining the destiny of world politics.”²⁵ With this strategy, South Korea might distance itself from the United States and Japan but not completely end the U.S.-ROK alliance. At the same time, Seoul would forge closer ties with Beijing. By doing so, South Korea would give an impression to the Chinese that they are succeeding in drawing South Korea away from the United States, while the United States would be concerned that South Korea is becoming closer to China. As a result, both Washington and Beijing would ardently court Seoul, which could use its clout to draw concessions from both sides on economic, security, or political issues. This strategy would work only if the United States and China are roughly equal in power and the U.S.-China competition is intense enough for neither great power to feel that it can afford to alienate South Korea. However, secondary states usually do not have much control over their strategic environments. If the regional balance of power suddenly shifts or if great powers choose to collude to exploit weak states, the results can be catastrophic. For example, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japan defeated both China and Russia and overturned the balance of power in Asia, while it colluded with the United States to decide on their respective spheres of influence in Korea and the Philippines.²⁶ Hence, an equilibrium strategy carries significant risks for a small state such as South Korea.

REGIONALISM

South Korea could push to create an institutionalized security mechanism in East Asia by promoting regional peace initiatives and by bolstering existing cooperative activities. With existing mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, South Korea could take the lead in building coalitions on select issue areas, such as North Korea’s denuclearization as an international public good, while also highlighting issues such as global climate change mitigation, development, poverty reduction, and health concerns. South Korea would continue to push for a multilateral peace mechanism.

Every South Korean leader since Roh Tae-woo has promoted some type of mechanism in pursuit of more effective regionalism, but proposals to this effect have failed to win sufficient support from larger states due to their concerns that multilateral mechanisms might restrain their freedom to pursue unilateral actions. The Park administration’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) has had a mixed reception. While supporters understand the value of a cooperative process to protect stability, opponents cite forum fatigue or the inefficacy of such institutions as a major drawback. As long as the great powers have differing interests, forging a regional security community will be difficult. Seoul also lacks the political, economic, or military influence to urge other states to seriously consider its ideas.

NETWORKING

South Korea might seek to perform the role of a networker or a mediator to reduce tensions among great powers. Such network power can be obtained via interactions with other countries.²⁷ Since the end of the Cold War, the idea of South Korea as a bridge builder has been emphasized in various

forms by successive South Korean administrations through proposals to establish a multilateral security mechanism designed to restrain regional conflict among great powers. In the most recent iteration, the Park Geun-hye administration promoted functional cooperation in Europe through the Northeast Asian Peace and Cooperation Initiative.

Under the current circumstances, South Korea might use its good relations with both the United States and China to promote greater transparency and communication, decrease mistrust, and open avenues for liberal trade policies, including existing bilateral and overlapping multilateral free trade agreements. Moreover, Seoul could use its ties with Washington and Beijing to act as an interlocutor vis-à-vis other middle powers and small states in Asia, especially with ASEAN member nations. South Korea can also continue to support open channels for U.S.-Japan-ROK and China-Japan-ROK trilateral diplomacy to build common understanding among the countries. Network diplomacy would not fundamentally reshape the region but would provide more trust and better understanding among great powers.

This strategy faces several problems. To begin with, it assumes that more diplomacy and better understanding can influence the behavior of larger neighbors and mitigate the clashing interests of the United States, China, and other great powers. However, if differences on issues such as the long-term U.S. presence in the western Pacific and democracy promotion are irreconcilable, then no amount of network diplomacy will help unless one side makes concessions. Moreover, a network power has to have substantial and strategic ties throughout a region to gain advantages. However, inter-Korean relations have deteriorated to their worst levels since the end of the Cold War, and Japan-ROK relations have only just begun to improve. These gaps limit South Korea's ability to be a networking power. Furthermore, South Korea's networking capabilities work best when the nation is on good terms with the countries it seeks to influence. Hence, the state of international relations is a variable that influences South Korea's networking capacity. The best Seoul can hope for is to reinforce a stable regional order when it exists and hope that it does not deteriorate. Yet, as regional tensions intensify, South Korea's networking capacity, too, would likely diminish.

Choosing Among the Options

Not all of South Korea's options discussed here are mutually exclusive. For example, South Korea could pursue hedging, regionalism, and networking simultaneously; it has been attempting to do so since the end of the Cold War. Nonetheless, South Korea today has greater capacity than it did in the past to influence the strategic environment in Northeast Asia while pursuing its national goals.

Understanding the strategic choices South Korea faces first requires making certain assumptions about the future of Northeast Asia's strategic environment. First, the U.S.-ROK alliance will likely remain strong for the foreseeable future, despite President Trump's rhetoric during his campaign and the domestic turmoil in South Korea. Two days after his election victory, Trump assured his South Korean counterpart in a phone call that the United States will work with South Korea "until the end" to ensure the security of both nations.²⁸ Second, the regional strategic environment is evolving gradually, but U.S. dominance in the region is unlikely to erode anytime soon. China's rise is real, but also gradual and uncertain. It still lacks the political, economic, and military capacities to match those of the United States: its economic growth is slowing, and the direction of its internal political development is uncertain. In Japan, despite Abe's energetic push to reinvigorate the country, changes such as the ability of the Japanese military to participate in collective defense have been incremental, and Abenomics has largely proven ineffective in overcoming Japan's structural economic problems. Third, the sustainability of South Korea's middle-power status in the face of its structural economic and demographic problems and trade dependence is unclear. Fourth, the North Korean threat will remain the greatest potential source of instability in the region. The strategic environment in Northeast Asia will be tense but perhaps not as dangerous as the one that existed in Europe prior to World War I, as the latter was far more multipolar than is the former.

Seoul needs Washington and will continue to seek reassurance regarding the reliability and durability of the U.S.-ROK alliance. This diminishes the likelihood that South Korea would pursue accommodation, neutrality, or equilibrium, as those options would involve weakening or abandoning the alliance. South Korea would gain little to nothing by accommodating China, which seems to have little regard for Seoul's interests. South Korea is not powerful enough to sustain a neutral stance. The equilibrium option would not work because Seoul needs Washington more than Washington needs Seoul and because Seoul lacks sufficient influence over its larger neighbors. This leaves South Korea with balancing, hedging, regionalism, and networking. South Korea could pursue all of these options simultaneously to varying degrees, depending on how Northeast Asia's strategic environment evolves.

Because the regional geopolitical environment is changing gradually, South Korea could continue to adopt a combination of hedging, regionalism, and networking to mitigate tensions and to avoid limiting its own choices. South Korea could pursue balancing against China at a later stage if that becomes necessary. Effective hedging would require South Korea to make a clear assessment of issues critical to the maintenance of the U.S.-ROK alliance, those that affect U.S.-ROK relations but may not be critical, and decisions that can be deferred. Critics might argue that South Korea should more actively counter Chinese revisionism in Asia, but the Korean Peninsula's proximity to and his-

torical relations with China mean that such efforts could carry disproportionate risks for South Korea. Neither Washington nor Seoul can afford to alienate Beijing completely because they both need Chinese cooperation on Pyongyang. In addition, Seoul does not have to be proactive to balance Beijing; it merely has to maintain a strong alliance with Washington.

South Korea should continue to pursue regional security mechanisms and networking diplomacy, as it has been doing for the past decades. Even if such attempts fail, they would not hurt South Korea's overall posture. However, for such efforts to be effective, South Korea would need to create strong connections where they do not yet exist. For example, South Korea needs to resolve its historical disputes with Japan and move toward substantive cooperation on regional issues that enjoy consensus among major powers in Northeast Asia. Implementing and sustaining the December 2015 comfort women agreement—which secured the Japanese government's apology and compensation in return for the South Korean government closing the issue for good and working to remove the comfort women statue in front of the Japanese embassy—would be an effective step in this direction. Further cooperation could include nontraditional security issues, such as global health, nuclear power safety, green growth, antipiracy operations on maritime trade routes, and economic development. Finally, South Korea needs to pursue serious economic reforms and restructuring to maintain its status as a middle power: the current situation that combines high household debt, stifled innovation potential, and a stagnant economy does not bode well.²⁹

If regional relations in East Asia continue to deteriorate, South Korea will be confronted with the choice of whether to balance against or accommodate China. For example, increasing frictions over the South China Sea could push U.S. policymakers to determine that South Korea has to do more to maintain the freedom of navigation there, putting increased pressure on Seoul to choose between the two sides. Under such circumstances, South Korea could begin to distance itself from the United States and its alliance responsibilities, especially as it sees China's power increase to the point where it replaces the United States as the region's dominant force—or it could choose to strengthen its ties with the United States and Japan to prevent Chinese attempts to claim hegemony in East Asia. South Korea would feel these pressures before China actually attains parity with the United States. Since South Korea has little to gain from accommodating China, Seoul will likely choose to strengthen its alliance with Washington and balance against Beijing. However, if the growth of Chinese economic and military power falters, South Korea would not have to confront such a situation.

Implications for U.S. Policymakers

The strategic choices South Korea faces have three implications for U.S. policymakers. First, Washington should not overreact to every South Korean move that seems to be tilting toward Beijing. South Korea is not about to become a Chinese tributary state and has not taken a stance against the United States on any issue relevant to the strength of the bilateral alliance. For example, South Korea sided with the United States against Xi Jinping's call for a so-called Asia for Asians—a concept that Beijing had hoped Seoul would agree to during the 2014 Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia—and refused to join the Chinese position attacking the U.S. alliance system in Asia. On the other hand, South Korea's move to join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was driven more by its economic than its security interests, which remain fused to those of the United States.

Moreover, a loosening of the U.S.-ROK alliance would also undercut Seoul's leverage with Beijing and is not in South Korea's interest. South Korea is unlikely to unilaterally call for the removal of U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula under current conditions. In fact, reductions in U.S. troop presence have historically occurred at Washington's behest and not the other way around. The United States should recognize that South Korea's hedging posture contributes to stability in Northeast Asia by mitigating China's fear that the U.S.-ROK alliance might be directed against China. Regular U.S.-ROK consultations to coordinate policy redlines and scope for flexibility could be helpful for managing this issue.

Second, the United States should recognize that South Korea's reluctance to join in greater U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral security cooperation is tied to its interest in obtaining China's cooperation on North Korea and unification, and in avoiding entrapment in great power conflicts. At the same time, South Korea shares with the United States an interest in the freedom of navigation and in maintaining the liberal world order. Given that the Korean Peninsula is geographically closer to China than to the United States or Japan, South Korea would be the first to suffer if the Chinese modify the regional order in their favor. In such a case, South Korea would increase U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral security cooperation and take a tougher stance against Chinese revisionism. Until then, Washington can afford to be patient with South Korea and recognize that South Korea has more to lose than the United States if fails to confront Beijing on issues that directly impinge on South Korean interests. Attempts to pressure South Korea to join a balancing coalition against China could potentially be counterproductive and introduce unnecessary friction in the bilateral alliance.

Third, the United States should support South Korea's attempts at network diplomacy and the creation of regional mechanisms. Seoul's pursuit of such initiatives will not fundamentally alter the overall regional dynamics, but those initiatives could be tension-mitigating mechanisms that help to delay and manage crises. As a country sensitive to both U.S. and Chinese interests, South Korea could be in a good position to push regional mechanisms and network diplomacy with U.S. backing. Washington has yet to enthusiastically endorse Seoul's initiatives such as NAPCI, but Northeast Asian stability could benefit from better U.S.-ROK coordination on fostering regionalism and networking.

Conclusion

South Korea faces rising uncertainty as a result of growing North Korean threats, China's rise, its own crisis of political leadership, and doubts about the reliability of U.S. security commitments following the election of Donald J. Trump. Although Trump's presidency in the United States and the domestic turmoil in South Korea might affect the U.S.-ROK alliance and South Korea's strategic choices, the two events are unlikely to drastically change the bilateral relationship or the range of strategic options that Seoul faces. The North Korean threat is becoming ever more dangerous and is a common challenge for both the United States and South Korea. Both countries have to deal with an increasingly complex regional environment in Northeast Asia, which some analysts have compared to Europe before 1914. Although contemporary Asia is probably more stable than Europe prior to World War I, choices made in Pyongyang and Seoul could affect the Asia-Pacific region in unpredictable ways, particularly in the event of North Korean instability or provocations. Given the costs and stakes involved, no American president can afford to step away from the Korean Peninsula, and South Korea's next president will inherit the same problems and constraints that the Park administration had to deal with.

To maximize its strategic latitude and to help bring stability to Northeast Asia, South Korea should continue to pursue hedging diplomacy to maintain a strong alliance with the United States while deepening ties with China. At the same time, South Korea should continue to push for regional security mechanisms and attempt network diplomacy, while reserving the option to join in balancing against growing Chinese power. Pursuit of domestic economic reforms to sustain its capabilities is also critical, and will bolster Seoul's diplomatic capacity. The United States can work with South Korea most effectively by understanding that South Korea ultimately shares its broader interests. Therefore, Washington should allow some room for Seoul to maneuver in its relationship with Beijing. The United States should seek to maintain a strong alliance but not seek to lock South Korea into a balancing posture against China. With cautious but firm leadership and diplomacy, a flexible U.S.-ROK alliance could help prevent the catastrophes that engulfed Europe and Asia in the twentieth century.

About the Authors

Scott Snyder is senior fellow for Korea studies and director of the U.S.-Korea Policy program at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), where he served as an adjunct fellow from 2008 to 2011. Prior to joining CFR, Snyder was a senior associate in the international relations program of the Asia Foundation, where he founded and directed the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy. He also served as the Asia Foundation's representative in South Korea from 2000 to 2004. Snyder was also a senior associate at Pacific Forum Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS). He has worked as an Asia specialist in the research and studies program of the United States Institute of Peace and as acting director of Asia Society's contemporary affairs program. Snyder was a Pantech visiting fellow at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center from 2005 to 2006. He has provided advice to nongovernmental and humanitarian organizations active in North Korea and serves as co-chair of the advisory council of the National Committee on North Korea. Snyder is the author of numerous book chapters on Korean politics and Asian regionalism. He is also author of *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States* (with Brad Glosserman); *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security*; and *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior*. Snyder is the coeditor of *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society* and *Paved With Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea* and the editor of *Middle-Power Korea: Contributions to the Global Agenda*; *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security*; and *The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*. Snyder received a BA in English and history from Rice University and an MA in East Asian studies from Harvard University.

Darcie Draudt is a PhD student in political science at Johns Hopkins University. She is also a non-resident James A. Kelly Korean studies fellow at Pacific Forum CSIS and director of research at Sino-NK. Previously, Draudt was a research associate in CFR's U.S.-Korea Policy program. Draudt also lived in Seoul, where, in addition to studying Korean and modern history at Yonsei University, she worked as a field researcher for the International Organization for Migration's research and training center and as publishing and design manager for Yonsei University's *Journal of International Studies*. Draudt holds a BA in anthropology from Davidson College and an MA in Korean studies from Yonsei University's Graduate School of International Studies.

Sungtae "Jacky" Park is research associate in CFR's U.S.-Korea Policy program. He was also a nonresident fellow with the Center for the National Interest's young leaders program, a research associate at the Congressional Research Service, and a research assistant at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Park specializes in international security and great power politics, and in his previous positions he conducted research and analysis on topics including U.S. foreign policy, emerging military technologies, arms control, defense analysis, energy development, the Middle East, and Europe. Park earned his BA in politics from Brandeis University and obtained an MA in security policy studies from George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

Endnotes

1. One of the most widely used and systemic definitions of a great power is by John J. Mearsheimer, who argues that a great power “must have sufficient military assets to put up a serious fight in an all-out conventional war against the most powerful state in the world. The candidate need not have the capability to defeat the leading state, but it must have some reasonable prospect of turning the conflict into a war of attrition that leaves the dominant state seriously weakened, even if that dominant state ultimately wins the war. In the nuclear age great powers must have a nuclear deterrent that can survive a nuclear strike against it, as well as formidable conventional forces.” As the United States is the dominant power at the global level, China and Russia would be the only great powers at the global level. In Northeast Asia, however, Japan, whose navy can easily match China’s, would also qualify as a great power. Japan can also obtain a nuclear arsenal within months, if necessary. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 5.
2. See Ronald O’Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, June 17, 2016.
3. See John C. G. Rohl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser’s Personal Monarchy, 1888–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 924; Dominic Lieven, *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution* (New York: Penguin Group, 2015).
4. See Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).
5. Kevin Rudd, “Lessons from Europe 1914 for Asia 2014,” in *The Next Great War? The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.-China Conflict*, eds. Richard N. Rosecrance and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), pp. 201–2.
6. Quoted in “Again Roh Fails to Consult the People,” *Chosun Ilbo*, March 22, 2005, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2005/03/22/2005032261037.html.
7. Jane Perlez, “Chinese President’s Visit to South Korea Is Seen as Way to Weaken US Alliances,” *New York Times*, July 2, 2014, <http://nytimes.com/2014/07/03/world/asia/chinas-president-to-visit-south-korea.html>.
8. “ROK-U.S. Alliance Agrees to Deploy THAAD,” U.S. Forces Korea, July 7, 2016, <http://www.usfk.mil/Media/Press-Releases/Article/831166/rok-us-alliance-agrees-to-deploy-thaad/>.
9. Sungtae “Jacky” Park, “How China Sees THAAD,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 30, 2016, <http://csis.org/analysis/pacnet-32-how-china-sees-thaad>.
10. Simon Mundy, “South Korea Export Growth Slows to Trickle as China Demand Wanes,” *Financial Times*, January 26, 2016, <http://ft.com/cms/s/0/6c097e58-c3f4-11e5-b3b1-7b2481276e45.html>.
11. David E. Sanger and Choe Sang-hun, “As North Korea’s Nuclear Program Advances, U.S. Strategy Is Tested,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2016, http://nytimes.com/2016/05/07/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-us-strategy.html?_r=0.
12. Soonkun Oh, “The U.S. Strategic Flexibility Policy: Prospects for the U.S.-ROK Alliance” (Naval Postgraduate School, 2006).
13. “United States and the Republic of Korea Launch Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership,” U.S. Department of State Media Note, January 19, 2006, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/59447.htm>.
14. Xiang Li, “China’s GDP Expands 6.7% Year-on-year,” *China Daily*, January 20, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-01/20/content_28009857.htm.
15. For example, see Alexander Gray and Peter Navarro, “Donald Trump’s Peace Through Strength Vision for the Asia-Pacific,” *Foreign Policy*, November 7, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/07/donald-trumps-peace-through-strength-vision-for-the-asia-pacific/>.
16. Tom Le, “Japan’s Security Bills: Overpromising and Under-Delivering,” *The Diplomat*, October 4, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/japans-security-bills-overpromising-and-under-delivering>.
17. “Parallel Economics,” *Economist*, December 29, 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/17800091>.
18. Subin Kim, “Korean Unification Costs Would Exceed \$2.7 Trillion: Researcher,” *NK News*, March 6, 2015, <http://nknews.org/2015/03/unification-costs-would-exceed-2-7-trillion-researcher>.
19. Sue Mi Terry, “Unified Korea and the Future of the U.S.-South Korea Alliance,” Council on Foreign Relations, December 2015, <http://cfr.org/south-korea/unified-korea-future-us-south-korea-alliance/p37359>.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London, England: F. Cass, 1981), p. 187.
22. Byung-sang Oh, “History’s Lesson in Strategy,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, September 19, 2003, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=2033563>.
23. Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 30–31.
24. Mark Fitzpatrick, *Asia’s Latent Nuclear Powers: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

-
25. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, p. 35.
26. Min-young Park, "Gojong's Korea Caught in International Power Struggles," *Korea Herald*, July 11, 2010, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20100711000293>.
27. See Miles Kahler, *Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).
28. "U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump Reaffirms Washington's Security Commitment to S. Korea," Yonhap, November 10, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2016/11/10/0200000000AEN20161110006900315.html>.
29. Kil Pyo Hak, "Is There a Breakthrough in the Current Stagnation in South Korea?" East Asia Foundation, April 26, 2016, http://keaf.org/book/EAF_Policy_Debate_Is_There_a_Breakthrough_in_the_Current_Stagnation_in_South_Korea?ckattempt=1.