



North Korea and Regional Security in the Kim Jong-un Era

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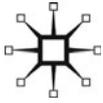


North Korea and Regional Security in the Kim Jong-un Era: A New International Security Dilemma

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*For Lisa
May your life be filled with the same joy
you have given your father.*

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Preface

The Kim Jong-un era in North Korea began in 2011 when his father, Kim Jong-il, died after suffering from a variety of ailments. The United States was never on friendly terms with North Korea during the Kim Jong-il era. In fact, because of various issues, things were tense in the region (because of North Korea) for nearly the entire time he led the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Nevertheless, North Korea was rarely at the top of Washington's national security priorities – then or now. Today, in the new Kim Jong-un era (beginning in December 2011) North Korea has a proven nuclear weapons capability, a proven long-range missile capability (including a capability to possibly hit strategic areas of the United States), a large and threatening military, and a government that continues to show instability within and between its key institutions. Some – perhaps many – analysts have opined that North Korea has now gone through profound adjustments in both its domestic and foreign policy actions in the first two years of Kim Jong-un's rule. But is this true? In fact, how much have things actually changed, and perhaps as importantly, is the system strong enough and stable enough to maintain Kim Jong-un's power?

In this book I will address several of the key issues that were important during the first two years of the Kim Jong-un regime. I will show why these issues are important, since the evidence shows that North Korea is built around a system and a governmental infrastructure that cannot withstand sudden or extreme change. Thus,

I will address several key issues that North Korea has presented to the international community during the first two years of the Kim Jong-un regime. Has the threat the North Korean military presents to the region changed, and how does its internal role affect Kim Jong-un's leadership and the power of his inner circle in Pyongyang? Will violent military provocations remain an issue, and how can they be deterred? How stable is the government as a whole in North Korea, and how will the international community (particularly South Korea and the United States) react to internal upheaval such as collapse or civil war? Perhaps most importantly, how capable is the South Korean military of addressing crisis, or war with North Korea – and how strong is the alliance with the United States? I will give the reader new perspectives and an opportunity to assess the future of North Korea – and the Korean Peninsula – based on the key issues and challenges I address.

I have written this book for an audience that is intended to include both functional and regional specialists, international security specialists, military planners, scholars in the region, and anyone who has an interest in gaining perspectives about how recent events have had a profound effect on what will occur in the present and the future on the Korean Peninsula. The information in this book and the assessments that it offers will be of interest to analysts on both sides of the Pacific. As such, the goal of this book will be to analyze current and recent history in order to assess these important events in order to make them both relevant and predictive for the reader.

In the research and writing of this work, there were a number of specialists and experts who provided useful insights. David S. Maxwell, from the Center for Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University, provided useful collaboration for many aspects of my research. Dr. Chun Seong Whun of the Korea Institute for National Unification is a specialist with important insights on North Korea that were quite useful. Mr. Greg Scarlatoiu, the current Executive Director of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea was helpful in providing perspectives relating to human rights and society in North Korea. Mr. Robert Collins, a retired senior staff officer in Combined Forces Command (the joint/combined military staff in Seoul, Korea), has been not only a mentor for me, but for many others for many years, and was extremely useful as I developed this project.

There were a number of other specialists who provided important analysis and comments for this work. Though it is not possible to

include all of them, it will be my pleasure to acknowledge several individuals who have been invaluable in my research. I would like to thank Dr. Hugo Kim, the president of the East-West Research Institute, Lt General Ray Ayres, USMC (RET), General John Tilleli USA (RET), Dr. Patrick Morgan of the University of California Irvine, Dr. Andrew Scobell of the Rand Corporation, retired senior intelligence analysts John McCreary and Merrily Baird, journalists Don Kirk and Evan Ramstead, Dr. Richard Bush of the Brookings Institution, retired Congressional Research Service analyst Larry Nicksch, author Gordon Chang, Scott Snyder of the Council on Foreign Relations, and my close friend and mentor, Dr. Lee Choong-mook of the Institute of Korean Studies. These people are all not only friends but respected professionals who have made strong contributions to the Korean Studies field.

I feel that I should comment on the transliteration of the Korean language that I have used in this work. The written form of Korean (Hangul) has never been transliterated in one specific form. That said, until a few years ago, the most commonly used form by Westerners and others, but not all Korean publications, was the McCune-Reischauer system. In 2002, the South Korean government changed to a new system, but this system is not used by all (or even most) publications in South Korea – and some continue to use either the old system or one of the other means of transliteration. Thus, any South Korean government sources that were used before 2002 will be under the old system, sources after that will be under the new system, and non-government sources from South Korea may have used various different systems for transliteration. I will use the new system for the most part in this work. Thus, when quoting sources using the new system, I will quote them exactly as written. When quoting sources that use a different system, I will also quote them exactly as written. So, it may appear that I sometimes use a different spelling for some of the names in this work, but in the interest of consistency, I believe the methodology described above will be the most practical for the reader. In this work, I used the Korean practice of placing family names first, not last whenever possible, unless individuals requested otherwise, or the sources used articulated the names in the Western style of placing family names last. The reader will also note that sometimes I refer to South Korea as the “Republic of Korea,” or “ROK.” All of these names are accepted in South Korea – in fact, many South Koreans refer to their country as simply “Korea.” While I most commonly refer to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as “North Korea,” some sources

refer to it as the “DPRK.” Either title is considered acceptable, and thus, at times the reader will see both in this work.

The responsibility for the writing and research of this work is solely my own. Thus, the views that I express do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of any US government agency, or any university that I have been affiliated with. References to internet sites were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor Palgrave Macmillan is responsible for websites that have expired or changed since this book was prepared.

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