1. Background

Korea's entry onto the world stage has not come trippingly; it started as a crawl but has turned into a sprint. Forgotten by most of the modern world because of Japanese expansionist policies in the early twentieth century and that country's almost exclusive monopoly on scholarship on Korea during the same period, Korea was even ignored by the Allies in strategic considerations during World War II. The plans for stripping Japan of its Korean colony and for eventual Korean independence were poorly conceived at the November 1943 meeting of the United States, Great Britain, and China in Cairo. These plans determined that “in due course Korea shall become free and independent”, but were badly executed. The three-year American military occupation (1945–48) of the southern portion of the peninsula, juxtaposed with the Soviet occupation of the north, became one of the first Cold War confrontations, both externally with the North and internally with southern, leftist, popular organizations.

Even the Korean War (1950–53), instigated by the North with the tacit approval and eventual support of the Sino-Soviet Bloc, as it was then called, has been known as the “Forgotten War”, yet this war was one in which the Philippines and Thailand each supplied a battalion to augment the defences...
of the United States and South Korea under United Nations auspices. Plagued by authoritarian rulers for a generation, subject to internal revolution in 1960, a military coup in 1961, and innumerable anti-government demonstrations in the interim and thereafter, Korea was not the poster child of the “free world”, as Western governments, principally the United States, liked publicly to proclaim.

If Korea’s entry into, and its first generation of, modern independence were inauspicious, it has since performed in stellar fashion advancing from one of the world’s poorest countries to become the eleventh largest economy on the planet; raising the income of its people from a few dozen dollars per capita to over $20,000; and earning worldwide acceptance and respect for Korean brand names in medium and higher technological products. Korea lacked natural resources, had insufficient arable land, was overpopulated, had little infrastructure beyond what had been destroyed in the Korean War, and operated under a deplorable political system. Even the education level was sub-standard at the time. Yet Korea succeeded. There are now more students per capita in tertiary education in Korea than in any other country except the United States. The Korean “development model”, insofar as it was not sui generis, has been widely studied. Its success, compared to other countries in Asia with the same income and population, came as a surprise to both Korean and foreign experts. Further, its evident and boisterous democracy, though not without its problems, has passed the ultimate political test — the transfer of political power from one party to another (not among factions of the same party) by peaceful electoral processes, not once but on several occasions. The military returned to its barracks after holding power through “civilianized” administrations for a quarter of a century — without a murmur. This is a feat that few states have achieved and none as seamlessly as the Republic of Korea. No other country has accomplished so much in so little time.

Although Korea is intensely integrated into the world’s trading establishment — about 80 per cent of the GNP is dependent on trade — Korea’s internal preparation and capacity for that role are less well developed. Korea’s contemporary international relations are extensive: it has free trade agreements with Chile and Singapore, spanning the Pacific; one signed in November 2007 with ASEAN (the “Framework Agreement” was signed on 15 December 2005); and another signed with the United States (though it is not yet legislatively approved and is under public dispute within Korea). Korean peacekeeping forces are in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, and a former Korean diplomat and foreign minister is presently Secretary-General of the United Nations. Relations with China, which had sent “volunteers” to assist North Korea in its fight against the South and the United States, have
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blossomed; China is now South Korea’s largest trading partner and the site of the Republic’s most extensive foreign investments. Tens of thousands of Korean students studying in China — perhaps some 50,000, although this figure may be underestimated. Relations with its former colonial overlord Japan have been generally proper, sometimes even good, since the normalization of relations in 1965, though this relationship is always subject to the winds of cross-strait nationalism, such unresolved territorial issues as Tokdo or Takashima in the Eastern Sea (or the Sea of Japan depending on which side of the Tsushima Straits one is situated), the spectre of the Yasukuni Shrine, and considerable emotional angst. Korea’s entry into the OECD in 1996 — the first Asian state to do so after Japan — provided a certain economic and developmental cachet. This has been matched by an economic development assistance programme that is designed to help foreign nations achieve a similar level of success while spreading Korea’s reputation and helping to secure overseas trading and investment relationships. The Korea Foundation has supported academic programmes and cultural awareness and knowledge of Korea abroad. The process of worldwide acceptance, however, has by no means been easy, and Korea’s intellectual preparation for its multiple international roles has been less than adequate. Southeast Asian relations are no exception.

2. Korea: Openings to and in Southeast Asia

On 21 November 2007, at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore, the Republic of Korea and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) — comprising all ten countries of the region3 — signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the establishment of an ASEAN-Korea Centre in Seoul, Korea.4 The establishment of this Centre was sought by Korea to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Korea’s Dialogue Partnership and Comprehensive Partnership with ASEAN, declared on 30 November 2004 in Vientiane. The commitment to establish the Centre, designed to improve economic and sociocultural ties, was reiterated at the 10th ASEAN-ROK Summit of 14 January 2007 in Cebu. The establishment of this Centre, to which the Korean Government has initially allocated some US$3 million, is an indication of the degree to which Korea is committed to the region, through multilateral as well as bilateral institutional ties with ASEAN and each of its member states in Southeast Asia.

The formation of the Centre is a symbolic confirmation of the many aspects of Korean involvement with the Southeast Asian region. It came serendipitously at the same time that this book was being prepared. This
work is an attempt to highlight the growing but often overlooked role of Korea in the region and the aspects of Korean society that have been affected by the deepening interpenetration of relationships. China’s historical and contemporary influence in Southeast Asia has been extensively documented and Japan’s contributions since World War II have been widely studied. But Korea’s relationships with Southeast Asian countries have been less well understood and appreciated. There remains a paucity of information on South Korea in the region in spite of many efforts, especially by the Korea Foundation, to fill that void at the academic level. Meanwhile, in Korea, there has been a growing interest in the area, reflected in the increased academic membership in and scholarship of the Korean Association of Southeast Asian Studies and the Korea Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. In the earlier period when Korea began to reach out to the region, bilateral conferences and symposia were held and some volumes produced that owed more to their diplomatic origins and objectives than to mutual analysis. At a 2005 conference in Singapore, relationships were characterized thus:

Public perceptions in South Korea and ASEAN about each other still lag behind the reality of substantive ties. On one hand, public awareness in ASEAN about South Korea remained low and was generally focused on the issue of nuclear proliferation and the North Korean crisis; while, on the other, the public image of ASEAN in South Korea is equally skewed in the years following the onset of the Asian Financial Crisis.5

If present Korean interests in ASEAN, as reflected in the opening of the new Centre in Seoul, may distinguish a new period in Korean-Southeast Asian relations, prior relations may conveniently be marked by two internal Korean events that prompted the growth of enhanced concern about, and Korean involvement in, that region. These were the 1961 coup by General Park Chung Hee that inaugurated the era of expanded relationships with Southeast Asia and the people’s bloodless revolution of 29 June 1987 that liberalized the Korean political process. Although both were internal to the Republic of Korea, the first prompted the Korean military to expand its trading and diplomatic efforts, while the second, by releasing previously repressed internal labour unrest and resulting in higher wages, effectively forced labour-intensive industries of Korea to move south.6

Prior to 1961, Korea was within the chrysalis of U.S.-UN policies. With minor exceptions, its policies were otherwise isolationist. Korea established relations with the Philippines in January 1949 and although Thailand recognized the sovereignty of the Republic in October 1948, formal diplomatic relations were not established until 1958. Significantly, both countries were
close to the United States. Both sent troops to Korea in the Korean War. But the focus of Korean concerns was on an anti-communist alliance; there were ties that continued in the post-Syngman Rhee period with the Asian People's Anti-Communist League. During that era, the United States had encouraged and supported SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), involving both the Philippines and Thailand, which was to act as a bulwark against the spread of communism as NATO in Europe and CENTO in the Middle East and South Asia. Occasional cultural troupes were sent to the region, such as those to the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, and Singapore in 1958, but otherwise relations were marginal.

South Korea's primary motivation for expanding its relations with Southeast Asia after the 1961 coup was an attempt to increase its worldwide legitimacy in contrast to the influence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Korean economic relations with the world consisted essentially of imports from the United States (up to 80 per cent of imports in the early period); Korean exports amounted to a few tens of millions of dollars of seaweed and handicrafts. It had no economic interests in the region in that early period. Korea had pursued an import-substitution policy rather than one devoted to expanding exports. The United States, in effect, guaranteed the Korean energy supply and other critical imports, the demand for which in any case was limited. Southeast Asia did not seem essential to Korean security.

Politically, South Korea was at a disadvantage. South and North Korea did not recognize each other, each claiming jurisdiction over the whole peninsula. The South operated in that era under the “Hallstein Doctrine” of West Germany, in which if a state recognized East Germany, then West Germany would not have diplomatic relations with that state. South Korea abandoned this doctrine by presidential decree in 1973. The fierce competition for recognition cast South Korea as an underdog compared to North Korea. As a virtual client state of the United States, South Korea was excluded from the Non-Aligned Movement. The Bandung, Indonesia, meeting of the Movement in 1955 was a blow to Korea, as North Korea had agreed to establish relations with any state that supported the Bandung principles.

President Park Chung Hee pushed what has been described as a “vigorous diplomacy”, travelling to the region in 1966 and, of course, pursuing the engagement of Korea in the Vietnam War, with massive political and economic encouragement from the United States, a subject detailed in Professor Seung Woo Park's chapter (see Chapter 14). It was perhaps Park's disillusionment with the commitment of the United States to the defence of Korea (the 1969 “Nixon” or “Guam” doctrine, which specified that the United States would
no longer engage in ground wars in Asia but would defend allies with air and sea power), and the withdrawal of one U.S. infantry division from Korea that led not only to his efforts at self-reliance — the development of heavy, chemical, and defence industries and an attempt at nuclear weapons capacity — but also increased Korean interest in expanding diplomatic and economic ties with other parts of the world, especially in Asia.

President Park, ever conscious of his rural background, took great pride in the Saemaul Movement (“New Village Movement”) that he founded and which nurtured, even demanded, rural change in Korea. A research institute was established to study the movement, which required state support and village self-help, but more importantly a training centre was initiated to train new village leaders and to which many foreign observers were sent. This was perhaps the first Korean “human resource development” programme — hundreds came from the developing world, especially Southeast Asia. How much it was emulated is questionable, given its rigorous, virtually military, regimen, for as a senior Philippine planner said, “We are not Koreans!”

The late 1980s were, for Korea, a period of internally induced change. The government of President Chun Doo Whan (1979–87) was widely seen to be of limited internal legitimacy, having achieved power through what was belatedly recognized as a “coup-like event” on 12 December 1979, following the assassination of President Park Chung Hee in September of that year. The Kwangju incident or massacre of May 1980, as it was variously characterized, further undercut the regime’s efficacy and standing both internal and external. Ironically, it was the North Korean attempt to assassinate President Chun Doo Hwan in Rangoon in 1983 that highlighted the South’s involvement in the region. President Chun was on a major diplomatic initiative in that area. Some seventeen members of Chun’s cabinet and close advisers were killed. He escaped because of a slight delay in his arrival at a ceremony at the Aung San Memorial.

Yet it was the massive civil protests of 1987 for reform, a new era of liberalization, and the direct election of a president — rather than by a blatantly controlled, select, pro-military group — that brought about change. This indigenous process of change was reinforced by the planned summer Olympics that were to be held in Seoul in 1988: any unrest would have embarrassed both the administration in power as well as the nation as a whole. The United States also encouraged this liberalization. On 29 June 1987, the government effectively capitulated to popular opinion (although it attempted to characterize it as a magnanimous gesture), and amended the constitution to allow for the direct popular election of a president and for freedom of the press. It also freed the most popular dissident, Kim Dae Jung,
from the death penalty — in 1998 he finally became president, a post he had formally sought since 1971.

The election of former general Roh Tae Woo as president in 1987 (he took office in February 1988) was caused by a split within the civilian opposition. President Roh was in a strong position: one of his major reforms was the development of “Nordpolitik”, or the opening to communist countries with which the Republic had previously had little if any official contact. This was, of course, the Korean equivalent of West Germany’s Östpolitik, or opening to East Germany. Nordpolitik proceeded in three phases: the analysis of trade issues, the formation of reciprocal trade offices, and finally the establishment of trade missions as de facto diplomatic missions.

Nordpolitik was the theoretical rationale for the new strategic calculus of President Roh Tae-woo’s foreign policy in the Sixth Republic … With the change in the governing system, away from authoritarianism toward democracy, the old practice of anticommunism by waving the specter of North Korea’s possible invasion of South Korea was no longer suitable or credible … Seoul’s Nordpolitik was aimed at achieving the two objectives of relaxation of tensions with North Korea and improvement of relations with the communist bloc countries of China, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe.

It was a policy of eminent success, which was spurred by the highly regarded management of the Seoul 1988 Olympics.

The liberalization process was neither confined to foreign affairs nor to internal constitutional changes. As the political liberalization process proceeded, so too did labour relations change. Korean exports had in large part been built on the backs of controlled and forcibly contained labourers who worked for low wages under poor conditions and who were unable legally to give vent to their anguish. The only legal umbrella trade union, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, was under government (KCIA) control. Laws even prevented educated individuals and students from working as labourers, as the state felt that they would incite labour unrest. Following liberalization, strikes became frequent and wages rose dramatically. At the same time, the United States was pressuring Korea to revalue its currency, the won, as the exchange rate also was fuelling exports and creating Korean surpluses, to the disadvantage of the United States. The result was the movement of labour-intensive industries to Southeast Asia, where labour was literate, cheap, and essentially controlled. Annual Korean labour costs per worker in manufacturing became prohibitive: they rose from US$3,153 in the 1980–84 period to US$10,743 in 1995–99 — a 240.7 per cent increase.
will document in Chapter 9, the need to find labour for low-wage and “dirty and dangerous” jobs that still had to be performed within Korea led to a reverse pattern — a means to employ inexpensive, foreign labour in Korea to fill the existing gap in manufacturing, as Koreans refused to work for the low wages necessary to fuel exports. Thus, “interns”, “trainees”, and others from Southeast and South Asia were imported into Korea, ostensibly to learn new skills but essentially to substitute for the Koreans. These workers were often subjected to sub-standard treatment, wages below the minimum legal for Koreans, and were denied basic labour rights. By 2007, there were 477,971 unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in South Korea, out of a total foreign population of over one million, or 2.19 per cent of the population. Due to demographic trends, the increase is “not anticipation, but a must” if the Korean economy is to continue to grow.18

As labour costs and conditions improved in Southeast Asia and when China was diplomatically recognized by Korea, there was increased interest in the movement of labour-intensive industries to China, where costs were even lower, transportation often cheaper, and where the Koreans were dealing with a culture they felt they understood, for the commonality of a Confucian patriarchal society (even in an ostensibly communist country) seemed to diminish the cultural dissonance that had given Korean managers and businesses in Southeast Asia a very bad reputation.19

It seems evident that in the past the Korean Government regarded the poor reputation of Korean labour practices in Southeast Asia as a product of certain individual Korean managers or firms and not as a systemic issue.20 Yet, while Korea’s advantages were remarkable, they were being squandered because of avarice, combined with a lack of cultural awareness that became more and more evident and was even expressed in the local Southeast Asian media, some of which was controlled by various governments, thereby indicating official concern. Korea had technological skills that were in demand and came to the region without either the historical impediments of Japan or of the local overseas Chinese populations that often controlled vast swathes of the local economies to the envy and chagrin of some indigenous populations.21 Yet knowledge of the cultures and issues of the Southeast Asian region was virtually lacking among Koreans in managerial positions. The capacity of Korean governmental ministries to deal with these cultural confrontations was also insufficient, as career advancement in the foreign service and other ministries was dependent on knowledge of the major powers, not of a backwater, as Southeast Asia was then considered.

This situation has, fortunately, changed. The importance of Southeast Asia to Korea is amply demonstrated by a variety of the chapters in this book.
ASEAN is the fifth largest trading partner of Korea, second in overseas construction, and third in overseas investment. Southeast Asia is prominent in the security calculations of the Republic, for a major portion of its oil and gas supplies emanate from or pass through that region. Thirty per cent of world trade and 50 per cent of energy supplies pass through the Malacca Straits — of course, these figures are much higher for Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. The region is the source of a variety of natural resources (timber, rubber, minerals, etc.) on which the Republic relies. Southeast Asia with some 500 million people is both a market for Korean products as well as a site for a variety of South Korean investments. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, security issues in Northeast Asia are of a more conventional nature, while those in the ASEAN region tend to be of a different ilk: terrorism, piracy, the protection of open sea lanes, environmental degradation, transnational health issues, pandemics, narcotics and transnational crime, border disputes, trafficking, radical Islam, multi-ethnic conflicts and unrest, migration, etc. In this chapter, Chung Min Lee links the security issues of Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia through the prism of China’s role in both regions. Policy and academic concentration on the vital issues of North Korea and Taiwan have deflected much-needed consideration of these linkages.

Korea is involved intimately in ASEAN through the “ASEAN Plus Three” mechanism, which Korean President Kim Dae Jung had advocated, but it is more directly related to security through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), of which North Korea is also a member. According to one eminent Malaysian, the most important contribution of Korea was to “kick start regional cooperation through the ASEAN Plus Three mechanism”.22 The ARF lacks a secretariat and has not been invoked in intra-ASEAN disputes or issues, as one might have imagined. Its potential thus remains unexploited.

The increased interest in Southeast Asia is reflected in the growing programmes and academic offerings at a variety of universities in Korea. Yet there are still many deficiencies, for as the number of researchers who have published on the region has expanded (see Chapter 14), the major universities from which the foreign affairs establishment and the major chaebol recruit still offer very little substantive education on the region. Graduates seem to be employed by smaller firms, which in one sense is a positive development as these were the type of firms that were said to have committed the most egregious breaches of cultural sensitivity in the region, especially in Muslim societies.23

Although mutual recognition, UN membership, and the promulgation of President Kim Dae Jung’s “Sunshine Policy” towards North Korea and subsequent policies have obviated the competition between North and South
Korea in that region,\textsuperscript{24} a new relationship has developed between the South and the North, through the influx of North Korean refugees through China to Southeast Asia and then on to South Korea. This route, although arduous, seems to have become popular, as the number of such refugees has exploded. Although the exact numbers have not been published, high-level Thai estimates indicate that North Koreans are entering that country alone at a rate of some 150 per month.\textsuperscript{25}

Beyond poor business managerial practices, there are three additional aspects of international relations that should be a cause of concern for South Korea, both to the government and to civil society. These are the patterns of foreign assistance, the influx of tourism, and the role of religious (Christian) missionaries.

Korean foreign assistance (see Chapter 7) is carried out under three rubrics. The first is KOICA (Korean Overseas International Cooperation Agency), established in 1991, which provides grants for technical assistance and training. The second is the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), founded in 1987, which provides loans. The third is a window for security lending, which has been evident in the case of Indonesia (see below). The initial pattern separating loans from grants was based on a Japanese model that divided the respective responsibilities for each between JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) and OECF (the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund). This is a split that in the case of Japan did not make for efficient administration, for the former was under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry and the latter under the Ministry of Finance — coordination was not easily accomplished. Korea, in copying many of the Japanese administrative organizational patterns, seems also to have followed the early Japanese aid programme model, especially during the period of Japanese reparations to some Southeast Asian states, as a means both to provide assistance and to develop markets for donor goods. EDCF loans are of four varieties: (1) development projects; (2) equipment loans; (3) two-step loans to governments or banks to allow end-users to procure equipment; and (4) commodity loans. Loans are not formally tied, but since they are in won, Korean firms benefit. The Asia-Pacific region absorbs some 60 per cent of the KOICA budget and about 58 per cent of all trainees.\textsuperscript{26} Overall, the ODA budget of Korea has expanded from about US$100 million in the early 1990s to about US$800 million in 2007.

Korea’s foreign aid is said to be “unique”, in that it does not support long-term projects but rather short-term, small-sized projects, thus concentrating on “tangible” results.\textsuperscript{27} There seems to be little in terms of the overall planning of assistance. Emphasis could therefore be given to the supply of Korean
equipment, which could help to open markets. KOICA collaborates with Korean NGOs in many fields; this enables Koreans to have field experience that could be invaluable to KOICA itself and to the Korean business community.

In addition to the official Korean aid programmes noted above, the Korea Foundation has made efforts to raise the country’s profile. Set up by the Korean Government, the Korea Foundation was first funded by a tax on all Korean passports, the rationale being that the world needed to know more about Korea as Koreans began to travel abroad. Now, the funds are appropriated by the Korean National Assembly. Many in the West who are cognizant of Korea will have noted the extensive grants provided to many universities for chairs in Korean studies, research by academic institutions, their faculties, and think-tanks, as well as the growth of major exhibitions of Korean artefacts, usually pottery, at many of the major museums in the world.

The Korea Foundation has been active in Southeast Asia as well. From about 1995 through 2007, the Foundation has supplied over US$1.4 million for the expansion of Korean studies, including large sum for the teaching of the Korean language. The largest recipient of funding has been the University of Malaya in Malaysia (US$326,875), followed by Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia (US$216,439). The University of the Philippines at Diliman received US$116,874, while Thailand received a total of US$368,315, spread among six universities (Mahasarakham, Burapha, Prince of Songkhla, Srinakhaninwirol, Silpakon, and Thammasat). The Yangon University of Foreign Languages in Myanmar received US$56,600, the University of Brunei US$80,313, and the National University of Singapore US$18,000. In addition to language training, research and publications have been supported as well as an extensive programme in human resource development through training and exchanges. Cultural activities have been sponsored, including support to Korean centres and Korean opera groups.

The effort has been impressive. The University of Malaya has more students studying Korean than Korean students studying Malay; it offers more courses on aspects of Korean history and economics than many universities in the United States. It seems probable that economics has driven interest in Korea, but the growth of the Korean Wave has no doubt been a factor as well.

Southeast Asia has become a major tourist destination for Koreans (see Chapter 11): some 1.2 million Koreans visited the region in 2007. Direct flights link Seoul to the major cities in Southeast Asia. Korean tourists are the largest group in the Philippines (23 per cent of all arrivals) and in Cambodia (16.4 per cent). In Vietnam, they constitute about 11.4 per cent and in Thailand 7.5 per cent. The growth of Korean tourism has been phenomenal.
From 1990 to 2004, Korean tourists increased from 65,731 to 754,093 in Thailand, 28,221 to 377,217 in the Philippines, and 32,977 to 189,949 in Singapore. In addition, some 230,000 Koreans resided in the region in 2007, with the largest number in the Philippines (approximately 87,000). Although in part welcomed by the countries concerned, the Korean tourists have not avoided sparking complaints.

These complaints are reminiscent of those sparked by the influx of Japanese tourists to the region in the 1970s. Then, there were worries that the destination countries did not sufficiently benefit from such tourism. The Japanese arrived on Japanese aircraft, stayed at Japanese-owned hotels, ate at Japanese (or Korean) restaurants, shopped at Japanese-owned or designated shops, and had tour guides and tour buses from Japanese companies. There was also at that time a good bit of sexual tourism that seems today to have diminished. Today, all these characteristics of Japanese tourism that offended the Southeast Asians have been transferred onto the Koreans. The Japanese are now regarded as appropriately behaved tourists, while the Koreans are often seen as rowdy, demanding, boisterous, and argumentative, insulated from the local culture even as they visit cultural sites. As did the Japanese, perhaps partly as a result of limited foreign-language capacity, Korean tourists tend to stick to Korean establishments and facilities. As Korea’s economy and family incomes have expanded, so too has a different group of Koreans, not educated in cross-cultural sensitivities, gained access to the region. There is a need for civil society and tour groups to educate Korean visitors in cultural awareness. In August 2007, Korea and Indonesia signed an agreement in which both governments expressed the determination to double the number of Korean tourists to Indonesia over five years. Rather than improve relations, this could well cause problems for both governments if undertaken without appropriate care.

The third area is missionary activity. Korea is said to send abroad more Christian missionaries (the most recent count is at 16,000) than any other country except the United States. Churches in Korea vie with each other to send young people abroad in this role, in part so that they may bond with the sponsoring church, but these activities are carried out with a sense of arrogance that is unacceptable and even illegal in many societies, for example in Muslim countries. According to one earlier study, as of January 2000 there were 8,208 Protestant missionaries from Korea in some 145 countries. Some have been characterized as “colonialistic” or “military-style” missionaries. Some of the problems are rooted in Korean culture (Confucianism, hierarchy, authoritarianism, han, “accumulated anger or grief”, etc.), which missionaries are not well trained to understand. There have been many conflicts among
missionaries themselves and problems with funding and lack of sufficient training. The training in area studies varies by institution, but there does not seem to be language training until the missionaries arrive in their host countries. A major issue is that mission-supporting groups want early demonstrations of success (i.e., conversions), so tensions are bound to develop.33

Although Korean foreign investment and economic assistance in the ASEAN area are dwarfed by Japanese involvement, an historical impetus to many of Korea’s goals has been to compete with and outperform the Japanese. Korea’s entry into the Vietnam market was prompted not only by its involvement in the Vietnam War, but also by the desire to beat the Japanese into Vietnam when that country first opened to foreign investment.34 The very first volume of Japanese assistance, together with more extensive pressures on the Japanese than on the Koreans by their U.S. allies, made for more cautious Japanese economic “adventurism” that was in the vanguard of U.S. policies. Japan also had to deal with local suspicions of Japanese economic neo-colonialism, the recreation of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”, that resulted in anti-Japanese demonstrations throughout Southeast Asia in the early 1970s. In addition, Japan more closely followed, at least verbally, U.S. concerns about human rights and democracy and the untying of economic aid in the region. Korea in its quiet way has ignored some U.S. pressures to conform to that country’s policies. This was evident in Libya when the United States placed stringent sanctions on that country and more recently in the case of Myanmar, where U.S. sanctions are also in place.35

More fundamentally, a problem facing Korea in attempting to deal both with Southeast Asian workers in Korea and with Southeast Asian cultures in the field, so to speak, is the inherent concept of Koreans not only as a nation but as a “race” of “pure blood”, linked by common ethnicity, culture, and indeed as a family. Yet recently some 13.6 per cent (11.1 per cent in 2007) of all marriages in Korea were international. Many of these marriages are with ethnic Koreans who have Chinese citizenship, but significant numbers are with non-Koreans and this is forcing, albeit slowly, a change in Korean attitudes. This provincialism affects how Koreans regard foreign workers in their own society and the degree of cultural sensitivity they have towards other multicultural states. The problem is discussed in Minjung Kim’s chapter (see Chapter 10) about the role in Korea of Filipina wives, who have special status because of their English language capacities.

As one writer on the role of Indonesian workers in Korea describes, Korea is “characterized by a one blood, one race, one language, one culture, one people ideology…. In envisioning South Korea as the Borderlands, I suggest that its history with non-Korean others, including Indonesian migrant workers,
has been one filled with discrimination, violence, degradation and blocked possibilities. It is also, however, characterized by active rebelliousness, increasing syncretism, and creativity.”36 She continues, quoting Underwood, that Korea has “an ideology of purity and uniqueness and exceptionalism which is reinforced by government, education, media, and family”. It creates “an attitude of fear, even hatred, toward foreigners in the hearts and minds of modern-day Koreans”. This may be especially true regarding the estimated 30,000 Indonesians who have worked in Korea and who have been especially discriminated against because of their Muslim identity.37

President Roh Moo Hyun, however, aimed to turn Korea into a regional hub that would transcend the new, impressive Incheon airport near Seoul and become a banking and commercial centre for the region and beyond. Yet the traditional attitudes towards foreigners of any stripe, when they intrude on Korean cultural norms and beliefs more intimately than simply as trading partners, may be slowly mitigated only by educating the population in alternative views both of themselves and other societies.38

The issue is not simply a long-term question. The demographics of Korea (and even more acutely those of Japan) are forcing the importation of new peoples into the society. Korea is rapidly ageing and the fertility of women in Korea is said to be among the lowest in the developed world. This, in effect, means that the replenishment of the Korean labour force will not occur internally, but must be externally induced. With this will come migration and intermarriage and a dilution of that mythic, preoccupation of Koreans, that they are a “pure” race.39 This is not likely to happen without significant social, even political, trauma.

3. Origins, Contents, and Issues

This book has been about a year in preparation. It was a collaborative effort by the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, which offered the editor a semester’s sabbatical to pursue this research in Singapore; the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, which housed the researcher and was the sponsor and host of the planning meeting for this study in October 2007; the Asia Foundation Seoul Office, which provided logistic planning and intellectual support for the meeting in March 2008 from which this book emanates; and the Korea Foundation, which supported travel and conference expenses, as did the Pacific Century Institute. The dialogue on all of these issues, leading to this book, could not have been accomplished without the collaboration of the Korean Association of Southeast Asian Studies, whose members are the backbone of Korean knowledge of and intellectual
involvement in Southeast Asia. The authors of this book thank all these
institutions and their staffs for their participation and support.

The limitations of time and the costs of publishing have not allowed the
sponsors to pursue all aspects of Korea’s involvement in the region as we
would have hoped. In spite of these limitations, we have attempted to cover
significant aspects of Korea’s engagement with Southeast Asia, drawing upon
specialists to delve into as broad a variety of subjects as time and finances
would allow. The reader will note that most of these chapters are by Koreans;
only three are by Southeast Asians. This was not the original intent, which
was to have a more equal division of labour. Extensive travel in Southeast
Asia, however, led the editor to conclude that there were few Southeast Asians
who considered themselves specialists and who were willing to write on Korea
from a Southeast Asian perspective. This is a gap we will consider in the
concluding chapter of this book.

The scope of this study is outlined below, but it is important to mention
what has been excluded. There is, for example, little historical analysis in this
book, with the exception of Korea’s engagement with Vietnam. One would
have liked to have been able to include case studies of various important
Korean business efforts, such as the eminent success of the Korlao company
in Lao PDR (a company that is the largest private concern in Lao PDR and
that has captured 50 per cent of the automobile market), and of business
failures, such as in the automobile industry in Indonesia. Although one
country study, on Vietnam, has been included in this book, one would have
liked to have had additional studies of the extensive Korean involvement in
Indonesia, Thailand (with some 200 Korean companies in the country and
over 70 Korean restaurants in Bangkok alone out of 120–130 in the entire
country), the increasing use of the Philippines as a base for training Koreans
in English, and the importance of the often forgotten Korean role in Myanmar
(Burma), in which there are some 40 Korean garment factories employing
30,000 workers and where over 1,000 Koreans reside. Daewoo’s role there in
offshore gas exploration and exploitation has been innovative and critical.
Both South and North Korea have supplied arms to that government. In
additional, more sectoral studies would have been useful beyond the chapter
on Samsung and the electrical sector (see Chapter 6), for instance on energy,
an increasingly important security issue. In a sense, the first and last chapters are
efforts to at least identify, if not eliminate, the lacunae inherent in such a book.

Finally, the concluding chapter attempts to draw out lessons from these
studies and make recommendations to the various actors both in Korea and
in ASEAN as to what might be done to improve the mutual benefits of these
expanding relationships.
Here we will not outline each of the chapters in this book, for their titles indicate their content. It may be useful, however, to add a few comments subsidiary to the analyses presented herein. Strategic interests are necessarily part of Korea’s preoccupation with the region. These range from the provision of energy supplies and raw materials from the area to the protection of the sea lanes on which Korea is dependent. The economic relationships are evident, but Korea’s associations with individual states in the area also allow it to attempt to generate support for Korea’s position in various international fora.

Perhaps the most important security relationship with an individual state in the region is with Indonesia. This would not be illogical, given Indonesia’s strategic location, size, natural resources, and market. It is also important because of Indonesia’s past (and perhaps future) leadership role in ASEAN and because of long, good relations with both states, Indonesia could play a mediating role between North and South Korea. In December 2006, both countries signed a joint declaration on a strategic partnership covering thirty-two areas of cooperation, ranging from the political and security issues to science and technology. Deepening cooperation is expected in eight fields: trade and investment, forestry, nuclear power plants, small and medium industrial technology, anti-corruption, defence and security, cultural centres, and tourism. The Korean Electric Power Corporation and the Indonesian state power company signed in December 2005 a memorandum of understanding on nuclear cooperation. Yet Reuters (3 September 2007) said that the regional branch of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim political party in Indonesia (and, indeed, the world), issued a fatwa against the construction of a nuclear plant, which would cost between US$1.5 and US$3 billion.

Defence cooperation has become important. From 1999–2006, Korea provided some US$130 million in loans for military vehicles and helicopters. In addition, Korea and Indonesia have agreed to a “counter purchase mechanism”, a sophisticated type of barter trade that involves exchanges of training aircraft and submarines. A third mechanism is through licensed production, especially of ships. This will be promoted through a Joint Defence Logistic and Industry Committee that will meet annually and that could eventually be a forum for defence policy cooperation. The fourth avenue is through mutual “capacity building” agreements for the exchange of training in the maintenance of military equipment.

David Koh, in Chapter 3, discusses the present and potential usefulness of the “smaller powers” of Korea and ASEAN increasing their relationships by narrowing the social and cultural space between the two to mutual advantage. Although the economic footprint of Korea is large in Southeast Asia, the
country's roles in other sectors have been less developed. He has a number of suggestions for redressing the imbalance in this chapter, and also in the conclusion (see Chapter 15).

The Korean Wave (hallyu) has caused something of a sensation in the Asia region — Southeast Asia is no exception (see Chapters 11 and 12). Korean film stars are the idols of many; tourist traffic into Korea has even markedly increased, it is said because people from other countries want to see the sites of many of these dramas. Korean popular singers are all the rage, and many countries run Korean dramas on television with subtitles in local languages. All of this not only provides sources of revenue, but more importantly it has built up Korea's pride in its own accomplishments and provides a positive awareness of Korea that had been sorely lacking. Yet this phenomenon is not without its dangers. Korean papers have been written on Korean culture as something of an international standard, and the Korean Government is using the hallyu as an element of its foreign policy to expand Korean influence abroad. For example:

Despite this linguistic barrier, hallyu is now a recognized agent of global cultural invigoration, committed to its core population of ethnic Koreans while simultaneously becoming attractive to a growing legion of adherents who choose to become cultural Koreans through their engagement with hallyu.

Two aspects of the Korean Wave and its components are included in this book: one by a Southeast Asian in response to it and another by a Korean who has observed it in the field (i.e., Southeast Asia). Dr Pavin Chachavalpongpun points out in Chapter 11 that the effects of hallyu are likely to be ephemeral, while Ambassador Joong Keun Kim, observing the scene from his vantage point in Singapore, writes in Chapter 12 on its remarkable effect in that region. Perhaps images of Korea have changed in the popular mind since 2005 (see note 5), for Korea is far more in the public eye. Yet that awareness does not necessarily translate into better policy either by or towards Korea. It is remarkable that, in discussing this research topic, leading Southeast Asian intellectuals and policy-makers found it extremely difficult to identify nationals in their own countries who could be considered specialists or even knowledgeable about Korea in any depth.

In Chapter 8, Professors Seok Choon Lew and Hye Suk Wang examine the Korean development experience to determine whether it is a model for Southeast Asia, as some have claimed. It is important here to determine whether the Korean development process is a model to be emulated or whether it is the results that should be sought. Korea's phenomenal growth
and reduced income inequality are targets that many states would like to reach. In fact, Korea adopted many characteristics that are inimical to the “Washington Consensus” of free markets and political freedom. State intervention (in violation of neo-liberal market principles), import substitution, the formation of monopolistic or oligopolistic markets, bans on various types of imports, together with a strong sense of political will all helped Korea achieve what it has accomplished. The disciplinarian ethos mandated by the state and the control over major businesses through credit mechanisms and direct intervention were policies based on President Park Chung Hee’s military (rural, middle-class) predilections and his mistrust of capitalists. The crisis of 1997 was based not on the continuation of this industrial policy but on its demise. Professor Lew maintains that globalization, contrary to the views of many, calls for a strengthening of the state rather than its decline. Southeast Asian states will have to find their own avenues for development, but lessons from the Korean experience may be germane.

In Chapter 14, Professor Seung Woo Park provides the backdrop to how Korea prepares intellectually to deal with Southeast Asia. Although Southeast Asian languages are taught at two universities (one in Seoul and one in Pusan), the universities considered elite in Korean society offer little more than broad exposure to the region. Yet these elite universities are the institutions from which government ministries and the chaebol recruit their new staff. The large-scale funding that the Korean Government has supplied in the past to higher education to ensure the country’s place in the globalization process, formally called saegyehwa in Korean, effectively excluded those institutions that provided in-depth instruction on Southeast Asia.46 So ironically the expanding research and training on the region in Korea has had less of an impact on the very institutions that are in the forefront of Southeast Asian relations.

Much more needs to be done in Korea to ensure that Southeast Asia and Korea enhance their mutually beneficial relationships. This book is a preliminary attempt to bring to public attention and to analyse a variety of important aspects of these multiple involvements. We hope it will complement the work of the new ASEAN Centre in Seoul and enable those responsible to build upon the progress that has been made and to diminish the deficiencies we have enumerated.

NOTES

1. Consider the potential impact had the Allies publicly stipulated that all Koreans in the Japanese army should be treated as liberated, rather than as enemy combatants. Many lives might have been saved.

3. In this analysis, the new state of Timor L’Este (East Timor) is excluded.

4. The following is from the text of that MOU.

5. "Conference on Strengthening the Korea-ASEAN Relationship", *Trends in Southeast Asia Series* 10, Executive Summary (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005). The Seoul Forum, an influential multi-academic-business intellectual group, alone has held six meetings on the area both in Korea and the region.

6. See David I. Steinberg, "South Korea in Southeast Asia: Enhancing Returns and Reassurances", *Southeast Asian Affairs* 1995, edited by Daljit Singh and Liak Teng Kiat (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995), pp. 74–88. Since there were no official relations with China in 1987, and since even the concept of North Korean industrial zones were still in the far distant future, as the North was still an enemy, there were few alternatives to Southeast Asia if Korea were to expand its export economy, hindered by rising internal labour costs.


8. For example, in 1949, South Korea was recognized by 5 countries and North Korea by 10. By 1960, they were each recognized by 14 countries. By 1962, however, the Republic had 52, and the People’s Republic 14, and by 1978 the totals were 104 and 93 respectively. Park, op. cit., p. 56.

9. This doctrine lasted from 1955 to 1969 and was first applied to Yugoslavia in 1957. It ended with the change in policy by West Germany to östpolitik.


11. Personal interview, Manila, 1974. A senior adviser on rural development to President Park, when asked why he gave up a prestigious academic appointment to work for him, said that Park would be the last president who would feel empathy for farmers, a background from which the adviser came.

12. That three North Korean agents were able to penetrate the memorial to General Aung San in Rangoon and place a bomb in its ceiling was likely caused by the purge of the chief of Burmese military intelligence, which in Burmese custom involved the dismissal of all his loyal staff (his entourage), and thus military intelligence, which probably could have prevented the bombing, was decimated.


14. Dlynn Faith Armstrong, "South Korea’s Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: A Middle Power Perspective" (Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University,
1997).


16. The figures are dramatic. There were only 276 labour disputes in 1986, involving 47,000 participants, and 72,000 work days were lost. In 1987, there were 3,749 disputes, with 1,262,000 participants and 6,947,000 lost working days. In 1988, there were 1,873 disputes with 293,000 workers, and 5,401,000 lost working days (Korean Ministry of Labor). Quoted in Sung-Baik Nam, “Labour Policy and Industrial Relations: Korea’s Experience”, paper presented at the Second Korea-ASEAN Conference, “Trends in Economic and Labour Relations between ASEAN and Korea”, 19–20 October 1995.


19. The search for low-cost labour in a culturally familiar environment with positive political implications has led to the establishment of a South Korean-financed industrial park in Kaesong in North Korea.

20. Personal interview, Jakarta, with a high-level Korean official, circa 1994. But, as Aris Ananta noted, “Korean labors (sic) have made more problems than other foreign labors in Indonesia. Less conflict is found with other foreign labors.” “Labour Policy in Indonesia in Relation to Foreign Firms and Labour Relations in Korean Firms in Indonesia”, paper presented at the Second Korea-ASEAN Conference, October 1995.

21. There were some individual memories of the brutality of some Koreans who served in the Japanese army during World War II.


23. In travel around the ASEAN region in 2007, it was very difficult to identify Southeast Asians who were regarded, or regarded themselves, as specialists or authorities on Korea and Korean relations with the region.

24. When the government of Myanmar in 2007 wanted to re-establish diplomatic relations with North Korea, which Burma (Myanmar) had cut off in 1983, the South Korean embassy in Rangoon and the Korean foreign minister (at that time Ban Ki Moon) in Seoul informed the Burmese that South Korea would not object to that change. Personal interview, Rangoon, 2007.


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27. Ibid.
28. The following documentation is taken from Korea Foundation documents in Korean.
30. These statistics are from the presentation given by Professor Jouyeon Yi-Kook of Ajou University at the March 2008 conference.
31. In Cambodia, the North Kyungsang Provincial Government, independent of the Korean Foreign Ministry, approached the Cambodians to build a Korean cultural centre and golf course in the UNESCO-protected Angkor cultural region. The Cambodians wisely turned this offer down and agreed to let them build in Phnom Penh instead. Personal interview, Phnom Penh, November 2007.
32. In Korea, “Christian” refers only to Protestants. Catholics are considered separately.
34. Comments in Seoul were that as Japan economically benefited from the Korean War, Korea would benefit from the Vietnam War, and as Japan re-emerged in the world after World War II as a result of the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, so Korea would be on the world stage after the 1988 Seoul Olympics.
35. According to the Xinhua News Agency (6 November 2006), Korean investment in Myanmar totalled $191.3 million in 34 projects, involving 100 companies. Bilateral trade was $124.59 million in 2005–06: exports were $38.63 million, and imports from Korea $85.96 million. Kim Dae Jung has been an exceptionally strong supporter of the opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been a strong advocate against foreign investment or economic assistance to that country.
36. Carol Marie Harvey, “Speaking Transnationally: An Ethnographic Study of Indonesian Migrant Workers on the Borderlands” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, July 2005), p. 4. Other sources indicate that there are approximately 140,000 Muslims in Korea, of whom 100,000 are foreigners.
37. A story told of a Korean manager in an Indonesian factory forcing his Muslim workers to eat pork and kimchi so that they could work hard. The liberal newspaper, The Hankyoreh (19 December 2007) published an editorial “Ensuring the Rights of Migrant Workers” on the occasion of an international migrants’ day, and noted that Korea had not signed the convention for the rights of international migrants.
39. One of the attractions of North Korea for the leftist youth of the South has been the “purity” of North Korean culture and people. Many have felt that the culture of the South has been diluted by deleterious American or international cultural practices and that intermarriage further destroys Korean society. Thus, North Korea for this small minority is held up as the ultimate Korean cultural standard. As quoted in an Asian Times story in July 2008, a North Korean man said he would never marry a South Korean girl because that group has been polluted by
interrmarriage with foreigners.


42. See “S. Korea and Indonesia Agreed to Enhance Economic Cooperation, with Huge Energy Deals Soon to be Sealed”, *Diplomacy* 33, no. 7 (2007).

43. One retired Burmese colonel and intellectual said that Arirang television (a Korean station in English) was his favourite TV channel.


46. Under President Kim Young Sam, the term “globalization” was first used, but in an attempt to back off from too great a perceived diminution of Korean culture, the Korean term was officially used.

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