KOREA BRIEFING, 1993

FESTIVAL OF KOREA

edited by
Donald N. Clark

Published in cooperation with
The Asia Society

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Deborah Field Washburn,
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Preface

This edition of *Korea Briefing*, the fourth in the series, is issued in conjunction with The Asia Society's Festival of Korea, a yearlong, nationwide celebration of Korean history, culture, and contemporary life. A collaborative endeavor between The Asia Society and cultural institutions throughout the United States and Korea, the Festival begins in autumn 1993 and takes place in major U.S. cities including New York, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Houston, Atlanta, Chicago, and Seattle. Among its features are an art exhibition, an array of performances, a film festival, and a symposium series titled "Korea: Past and Present." *Korea Briefing, 1993* both stands on its own in a well-established series and serves as a companion to Festival events.

In addition to providing an overview of recent developments on the Korean peninsula—the precedent-setting election of Kim Young-sam as South Korea's first civilian president in more than three decades, changing security and economic relations between the United States and South Korea, the dramatic (though as yet unfulfilled) threat by North Korea to withdraw from the Nonproliferation Treaty regime—*Korea Briefing, 1993* supplies extensive historical background to these events. It traces South Korea's political and economic development from the time of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 to mid-1993. Likewise, it charts five decades of U.S. policy toward the Republic of Korea, beginning with an account of the birth of the Republic from postwar devastation in an atmosphere of growing U.S.-Soviet conflict, continuing with a description of the close military and economic relationship between the United States and South Korea, and winding up with a call for both sides to meet the opportunities and challenges of the new global strategic and economic environment.

This year's cultural chapters, on literature, dance, and music, explore the origins of these art forms and their evolution in modern times. Although the focus of the discussion of contemporary arts is on South Korea, sections on North Korean literature and music, as well as on the music of Korean communities outside of Korea, are included. The closely intertwined dance and music chapters are illustrated with photographs of performers and performances that complement Festival events.

A guiding purpose of the Korea Briefing series—and of the Festival of Korea—is to increase understanding by Americans of Korea and Koreans. To this end, *Korea Briefing, 1993* includes a chapter on Korean Americans—who they are, how they came to the United States, and what makes up the fabric of their lives today. The special challenges faced by the Korean American community in the wake of the 1992 Los Angeles riots are discussed in depth.

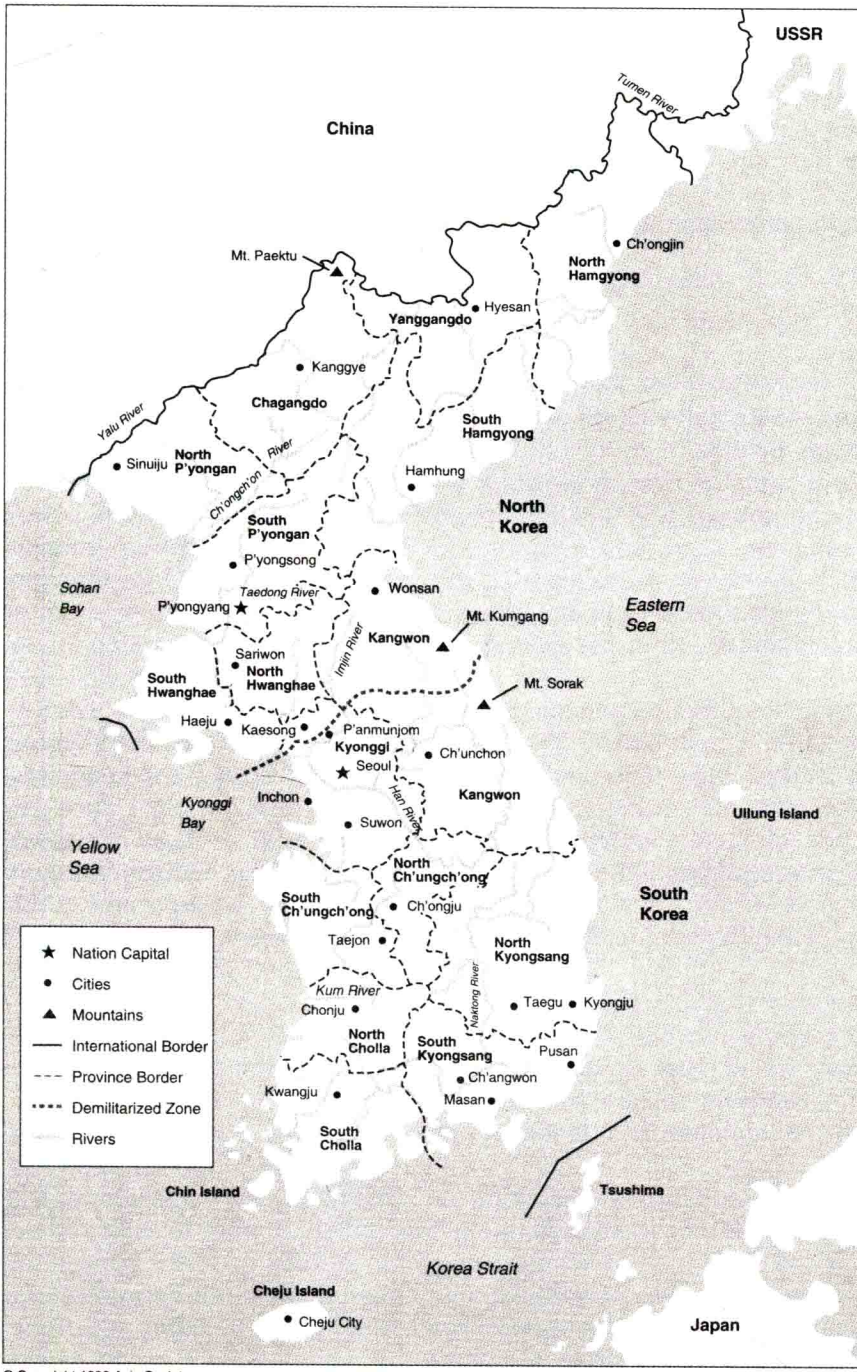
Two additional chapters, by a Korean and an American, are mirror images of one another. Drawing on personal experience and survey data, each author presents views of the other culture from the perspective of his own. By confronting areas of ambivalence and ignorance, both chapters puncture stereotypes and promote tolerance.

This special edition of *Korea Briefing* closes with a chronology of Korean history from the Choson dynasty (1392–1910) to the intensive negotiations between U.S. and North Korean officials over Pyongyang's nuclear program (July 1993). It includes a glossary of personalities and terms and a list of suggestions for further study that encompasses books, articles, sound recordings, and videotapes. We believe that this volume will both add an important dimension to classroom study and enrich individual exploration of Korea's past and present achievements.

Numerous dedicated individuals have worked together to bring this volume to completion. Editor, chapter author, and chronologer Donald N. Clark has been tireless in his commitment to the project. The high quality of the book is in large part the result of his efforts. We thank him and all of the other chapter authors, who fulfilled their assignments with proficiency and dispatch. At The Asia Society, Senior Editor Deborah Field Washburn shaped the chapters and oversaw all aspects of the project. Editorial Associate Sayu Bhojwani provided editorial assistance of a high quality, along with efficient management of all the details of publication. For the fourth straight year, Dawn Lawson copyedited the manuscript with great skill and thoroughness. Editorial intern Lisa Park made numerous helpful suggestions and proofread the chapters with care. Useful comments were also provided by Christine Kim, Gwi-Yeop Son, and Maria Tham. Finally, at Westview Press, Susan McEachern and her colleagues brought their high standards to bear on the volume's production.

Marshall M. Bouton
Executive Vice President
The Asia Society

August 1993



Contents

Introduction

Donald N. Clark

Nineteen ninety-two was the final year of Roh Tae-woo's term as president of the Republic of Korea, following his dramatic Democratization Declaration of June 29, 1987. Roh did much to convert South Korean politics from the authoritarian habits of military-led rule to the freer—and riskier—atmosphere of plural politics. With election reform political participation expanded dramatically, and there was open competition for seats in the national legislature and local councils. The voters opened up the system and made the government deal with plural points of view on many levels. As Roh left office, nearly everyone gave him credit for that.

Roh's foreign policy successes were even more dramatic. After a steady increase in political contacts and trade arrangements with the nations of the former socialist bloc, in 1992 he established diplomatic relations with two old enemies, China and Vietnam. He even succeeded in cracking North Korea's shell and moving it toward a more tractable position when it came to inter-Korean relations. Beginning in 1990, Roh's prime minister began meeting with his North Korean counterpart in a series of talks that led to significant reconciliation—at least on paper—in December 1991.

The year 1992 began on a note of high hopes for further progress toward reunification. Unfortunately, however, the difficult problem of nuclear weapons intruded to stall the momentum later in the year, and questions about North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program had grown into a major international confrontation by the spring of 1993.

Domestically, Roh delivered on increased prosperity, albeit at slower rates of growth. Rising wages outran increases in productivity; an intense effort to fulfil a campaign promise for 2 million housing units diverted too much money to the construction sector and created shortages; inflation and interest rates increased; and Korea once again began to run a trade deficit. But the Roh government managed to reestablish stability in 1992, with housing prices and real estate specula-

tion on the wane, inflation under control, and exports rising. Despite continuing concern over growing income disparities, the ongoing costs of maintaining a huge military establishment, and the disruptions that might accompany future unification with the North, most Koreans continued to believe in a brighter future.

In December 1992, the process of democratization in South Korea reached a new level when voters elected former opposition leader Kim Young-sam to the presidency. As Donald S. Macdonald explains in his chapter, the fact of Kim's election is eloquent testimony to how far South Korea's political culture has come in the more than 30 years since Korea had a civilian at the helm. Moreover, the public has shown enthusiasm for Kim's root-and-branch attack on corruption in the Korean system, something Kim referred to during his campaign as the "Korean disease." The new president has been fair but firm in dealing with people—even close associates—who have abused the system for profit. Such steps are necessary if people are to believe that Korea can function with an open democratic system. President Kim's unprecedented public approval ratings—over 80 percent—no doubt contributed to his strength as he delved into the secrets of past administrations and uncovered major scandals in the military and ruling-party establishments in 1993, and it is likely to sustain him for a good while to come.

In 1992 North Korea also passed some milestones. Kim Il-sung turned 80 in April, with crowds of cheering citizens wishing him "mansei"—"ten thousand years." His son and heir, Kim Jong-il, turned 50, beginning the year with an important new appointment as chief of the country's military forces. Yet for all the display of solidarity and passion for the North Korean system, the country's quandary was clear: how to maintain the rigid "Kimilsungist" system while opening the economy to much-needed foreign capital. It was the North Korean variation on a familiar theme in China and all the modernizing countries of East Asia: how to adapt outside influences to local needs without being corrupted in the process.

The leadership repeatedly exhorted North Koreans to work harder and consume less—with good reason. With few exports besides raw materials and weapons to offer the world economy, and with their former Russian and Chinese allies demanding cash for imports, the North Koreans were hard pressed to supply their needs for fuel and manufactured goods. North Korea's GNP shrank an estimated 5 percent in 1992, in the minus column for the third year in a row. Visitors—who were always on tightly controlled itineraries—reported that for the time being people seemed well enough fed and clothed; but it

became increasingly difficult to see how the regime could continue to sustain the country without some major changes.

To compensate, Pyongyang sought new possibilities. Through most of the year there was reason to hope that relations with South Korea, Japan, and the United States would improve dramatically. But by October, the nuclear issue had come back to blight all hopes for progress. With the South and its allies demanding bilateral inspections of nuclear sites, in which South Koreans would actually see North Korean installations as part of the 1991 denuclearization agreement, the North balked. The South countered by going ahead with plans for the annual Team Spirit joint military exercises with the United States in March 1993, further estranging the North Koreans, who regard the exercises as a hostile provocation. Amid demands from the International Atomic Energy Agency for access to North Korean nuclear-waste dumps that were likely to prove it had a weapons program, and with the Team Spirit exercises proceeding in the South, the North Koreans took a surprising and dangerous step: they announced that they would pull out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) on June 12, 1993.

With that, everything else was put on the back burner. The world community tried to pressure the Kim Il-sung regime to return to the fold, and on the very brink, two days before Pyongyang's NPT pullout was to take effect, the North Koreans agreed to stay for the time being. Many people marveled that a country with so few cards to play could cause such an upheaval and wondered glumly whether an accommodation could ever be found to settle the issue of Korean denuclearization once and for all.

This year's edition of *Korea Briefing* offers a trio of chapters intended to put recent developments in historical context. Donald S. Macdonald provides a concise overview of political development in the Republic of Korea since its founding in 1948, pointing to the historical significance of the Sixth Republic of President Roh Tae-woo and the election of Kim Young-sam. David I. Steinberg provides parallel treatment of the South Korean economy, highlighting the phases through which it has passed since the Korean War on the road to becoming one of the world's strongest trading economies. And Chae-Jin Lee charts the evolution of the U.S.-Korea military and economic relationship from a patron-client relationship to a more equal partnership.

And because this is the Festival of Korea volume of *Korea Briefing*, we offer three special chapters on Korean culture by outstanding specialists at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Marshall R. Pihl, one of America's most lucid interpreters of Korean literature, tells us of the painful birth of modern Korean literary culture through periods of co-

lonial oppression, war, and political censorship. Judy Van Zile introduces us to the world of dance in Korea, taking us from the formal styles of traditional court entertainment through the picturesque farmers' dances to the vibrant world of modern dance with its blending of Western and Korean motifs. In a related chapter, musicologist Byongwon Lee gives us the fundamentals of Korean music, some of which is rooted in the same upper- and common-class traditions mentioned by Judy Van Zile, and some of which is borrowed from neighboring peoples and the West. All three chapters are prime background material for audiences at The Asia Society's Festival of Korea events.

A third group of chapters offers insight into special features of the U.S.-Korea relationship. Eui-Young Yu reflects on the Los Angeles riots as they affected the Korean community in Southern California, using them as a springboard to discuss the history and way of life of the Korean immigrant community in the United States. Kim Kyong-Dong analyzes the ways in which Korean attitudes toward America and Americans have changed over the years, while Donald N. Clark looks at the relationship from the American point of view. The articles by Kim and Clark use survey data to highlight changes and problems that remain in the relationship, but they also provide personal vignettes that remind us of the human beings and feelings behind the dry statistics.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my fellow authors for their fine work on the chapters for *Korea Briefing, 1993*. They all accepted their assignments with grace, brought their considerable talents to bear on the difficult task of covering vast territory in limited space—and time—and patiently worked with the editors as the volume took shape. It is a privilege to work with such capable colleagues, and I am most grateful for their special effort. I am also thankful for the judgment of Senior Editor Deborah Field Washburn and Editorial Associate Sayu Bhojwani at The Asia Society, and for the mentoring shown by Senior Editor Susan McEachern at Westview Press. In the three years I have edited Korea Briefing I have acquired the greatest respect for their professional skills and standards and feel fortunate to have had their support.

1
South Korea's Politics Since Liberation

Donald S. Macdonald

The year 1992 may come to be viewed as a watershed in Korean history. The people of the southern half of Korea, who achieved an economic take-off a generation ago, have very likely reached their point of political take-off. To see how they got there, this chapter reviews not only the political events of the past year but the historical developments that led up to them. The focus on South Korea should not obscure the fact that the 65 million people on the Korean peninsula consider themselves to be inhabitants of one nation. All continue to hope for reunification of the politically incompatible North and South Korean states. How and when this will be accomplished remains the great question in Korea's future.

Introduction

During 1992, a series of political precedents were set in South Korea:

- On December 18, 81.9 percent of eligible voters went to the polls and elected a long-time political opposition leader and campaigner for political freedom, Kim Young-sam, as South Korea's first civilian president in 32 years (apart from a brief but portentous interregnum in 1980).
- Kim's victory, with a plurality of 42 percent, marked the first time in the history of the Republic of Korea (ROK) that a new president assumed office without a change in the constitution.
- The pragmatism that made it possible for Kim Young-sam to lead his party into a coalition with the government party in 1990, maintain the coalition, and ultimately become its standard-bearer was previously unknown in Korean politics.
- The principal challenger, Kim Dae-jung (also a long-time opposition leader), who received 34 percent of the vote, made a graceful

concession speech. That act was another "first" in Korean political history. As recently as 1987, the losers had cried foul in the face of evidence that the election had been reasonably fair.

These developments come after centuries of struggle by the Korean people against internal dynastic decay, the impact of Western industry and culture, foreign imperialist rivalries, colonial rule, and ideological division. Unlike many industrializing countries, Korea was a united state with a well-organized central government for hundreds of years before the modern era. The government, headed by a hereditary monarch and served by a sophisticated bureaucracy, was modeled on that of China. Though in decline in the 19th century, it functioned effectively in a basically static agricultural economy. As was the case in China, politics and society in Korea were guided by the Confucian classics, which looked back to an ancient golden age. The Confucian doctrine, as revised by the Sung dynasty (960–1279) sage Chu Hsi, was the measure of all people—even more so in Korea than in China.

In traditional Korea, the governmental and social structures were strongly hierarchical. Administration was in the hands of a meritocracy chosen by examinations that tested knowledge of the Confucian classics, but those who took the examinations were almost always the children of office-holders, thus creating a hereditary aristocracy. The officials monopolized governmental authority on the basis of their superior wisdom and benevolence; the people were bound to obey them.

But there were still pockets of political autonomy. In local farming villages, for example, the elders of the resident families were generally allowed to manage their own affairs. The patriarchal family, considered to extend as far as the eighth degree of blood relationship, commanded the loyalty of all its members, compelling them to subordinate their individual identity to its continuity and well-being. Family and small-group loyalties often superseded loyalty to the ruler or the state, and competition among rival leaders and factions for political power plagued Korea throughout its history.

So long as the physical and social environment of Korea remained reasonably constant, and so long as its rulers and ministers were alert to the needs of the polity, the Confucian system of government functioned well. The Korean political and social system never fully recovered from the Japanese invasion of 1592–98, however. This upset was compounded by internal dynastic decay. By the 19th century the impoverished Korean peasants, forced to support a swollen and parasitic aristocracy, had begun to manifest their discontent through popular uprisings.

As the West, both directly and through its modernization of Japan, came knocking at Korea's door, the Korean rulers sought to protect themselves through a policy of isolation and exclusion and the continuation of their traditional dependence upon China. This policy, together with the aristocrats' determination to resist social or political change, left Korea particularly vulnerable to foreign imperialism.

The Japanese, by their seizure of Korea in 1905 and subsequent colonial rule, denied the Koreans any opportunity for political development. With few exceptions, the population was encouraged to remain in its traditional agrarian mold, although it was mobilized in the 1930s and 1940s to work in Japanese-run industries and to support the Japanese war effort. Nonetheless, inspired by Woodrow Wilson's principles of self-determination, the Korean people rallied for independence in 1919. The Japanese promptly and forcibly put the uprising down, driving its leaders into exile.

With the defeat of Japan in 1945, Korea reemerged. Resentment at the oppression and poverty of the colonial era had sharpened the keen Korean sense of ethnic identity into a fierce nationalism. Despite this, however, the supposedly temporary division of the peninsula by Soviet and U.S. occupying forces, together with ideological differences among the Koreans themselves, interfered with the renascence of a united Korea and led instead to the emergence of two rival states, each representing itself as the sole legitimate expression of the Korean national destiny. This rivalry culminated in a tragic and costly war, diverting national energies from political and economic development to confrontation and military buildup, which were encouraged by the rivalry of the respective superpower patrons of North and South.

With help from their allies, both Korean states recovered from the war and achieved impressive records of economic development that would have been impossible without some measure of political stability. North Korea was far more successful than South Korea at first, because under its Stalinist political system, the economy could be more quickly built and its human and material resources mobilized more rapidly. In contrast, South Korea's political backwardness and economic stagnation were the despair of its international friends until the mid-1960s. By the mid-1970s, however, South Korea was rapidly gaining economic ground and the North was falling behind—although the South's gains were accompanied by political retrogression into quasi dictatorship.

In retrospect, it seems clear that while North Korea remained locked in its Stalinist mold, South Korea, through traumatic trial and error, was beginning to develop a modern and open political system —even as most Americans were criticizing its performance. Americans

seemed to believe that the three-year U.S. military occupation of Korea should have created instant democracy; that this did not come about was variously judged to be the fault of the Americans, or the Korean leaders, or both.

In North Korea, communism could readily be imposed from above, as it was in Russia, because it did not require or expect true popular participation—only popular enthusiasm. Democracy, on the other hand, must come from the people and be imposed from below. Democratic development may well take three generations or more, as will probably be the case in the states of the former Soviet Union—and perhaps in North Korea as well.

It is still too early to conclude that the process of political development in South Korea has reached maturity. The new president, before his inauguration, laid out an ambitious policy agenda. Its themes faithfully reflected current public concerns: to achieve national reconciliation by easing conflicts among regions, socioeconomic classes, and generations; to "cure widespread social illnesses," including pervasive corruption and the "legacies of authoritarian rule"; to reduce government intervention in the economy; to work for economic justice and the public welfare; to strive for reunification; and to strengthen international relationships. To achieve these goals without the levers of authoritarian leadership and in the face of increasingly vocal expressions of divergent group interests constitutes a prodigious challenge.

1992: A Pretty Good Year

As 1992 began, the citizens of the Republic of Korea were looking forward to no fewer than four national elections. The 1987 constitution specified a four-year term for the National Assembly, the Republic's unicameral legislature; all of its seats would be up for election no later than April. At the end of the year, in anticipation of the close of President Roh Tae-woo's five-year term, an election was to be held for his successor. In the interim, according to a law passed in 1989, elections (the first of their kind since 1960) were to be held for the executives of all of Korea's cities and counties and then for those of the 14 provinces and special cities. (A first step toward restoring a local voice in administration—which had been suspended since 1961—had been taken in 1991, when elections for city, county, and provincial councils were held.)

In January 1992, however, the president announced that the provisions of the law notwithstanding, elections for provincial and local executives would be postponed at least until 1994. He reasoned that four elections in one year would overwhelm the energies and atten-