

## Preface

The evolution of social, economic, and political ties among China, Japan, and Korea has fateful importance for global affairs in the twenty-first century. Japan and China are the largest economies on earth, apart from the United States, and together hold well over half of the world's foreign-exchange reserves. South Korea is an advanced nation in its own right. The Korean peninsula's internal uncertainties—particularly North Korea's nuclear and missile programs—could impact both Sino-Japanese relations and the broader world. Japan, China, and Korea are all technological powers of consequence in different political-economic spheres.

If the Northeast Asian trio actively collaborate, they could become the catalyst for a new global order—one of the few potential challenges to U.S. global hegemony. If the trio finds itself in conflict, its struggles could destabilize Asia, and perhaps the world. Northeast Asia holds, in short, a potential to reshape the world as we know it that is matched only by uncertainties in the Middle East.

Northeast Asia and its future have fascinated both of us throughout most of our careers. One coauthor has lived eleven years in Japan, taught at Seoul National University in Korea, and traveled more than 150 times across the Pacific, to all three countries of this region, over half a century. The younger co-author was born and raised in China, graduated from Beijing University, and has lived and traveled in Korea and Japan also. Together we have interviewed leaders, conducted seminars, and visited locations across the region—ranging from Korea's North-South railway station near Kaesong to Chiang Kai-shek's birthplace on the Chinese mainland—that bear powerful evidence to the historic transformations now underway.

This book has been close to a decade in the making—a decade over which we have seen our early premonitions—once intensely controversial—increasingly vindicated. The imagination of the senior coauthor was piqued first by the geopolitical changes set in motion by the historic Pyongyang summit of June, 2000, about which he wrote (“The New Face of Northeast Asia”) for the Winter, 2001 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Research at the East-West Center as a Pohang Fellow during the summer and fall of 2001 allowed him to deepen these conceptions further.

We began working as a team in the spring of 2002, just as the junior author, Min Ye, arrived in Princeton. Our first collaboration, as faculty advisor and graduate student, came in the fall of 2002, when we did a readings course on comparative regionalism together. This led to a joint paper on critical junctures and East Asian regionalism, which was published in *The Journal of East Asian Studies* (2004), and a decision to write this book together. In that connection, Min spent close to a year in residence at the SAIS Reischauer Center, where she completed first drafts of Chapters 5, 6, and 7. She has also done critical quantitative research and graphic presentation throughout. Cooperative research work in Korea and China, as well as a seminar that Kent taught at Seoul National University in the summer of 2007, were also important in the development of the ideas presented here. Seminars at Beijing University, East West Center, Fudan University, Harvard University, the Japanese Institute of Developing Economies, Korea University, SAIS, Sejeong Institute, Seoul National University, Stanford University, UC Berkeley, Waseda University, and Yonsei University, as well as panels at the American Political Science Association, the Association of Asian Studies, the International Political Science Association, and the International Studies Association also gave us important feedback.

Over the course of such a long and complex project, we have many people and institutions to thank. First and foremost are our spouses and our families, whose understanding we particularly appreciate. The Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies at SAIS has provided important financial support, and this book is written under its auspices. We also warmly thank the East-West Center for its support—both through the Pohang Fellowship Program, and through generous publication support. Boston University and the Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program also contributed to the book’s production. Valued research assistance has come from Mariko de Freytas, Sato Momoko, Yoshikawa Yukie, Wang Yanan, and Zhang Qin. We are also grateful to Muthiah Alagappa, who introduced us to his fine series at Stanford University Press, and gave insightful advice throughout. Geoffrey Burns and John Feneron at the Press have also been most helpful. We are likewise grateful to numerous academic colleagues, including Amitav Acharya,

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Both of us, having grown up in very different worlds, and having seen our own respective worlds change radically in recent years, cannot help but have a special interest in understanding political-economic change, both theoretically and practically. There is no higher task, for both scholarship and policy, as we see it, than understanding the forces that drive the future, in a manageable empirical context. Northeast Asia is such a context, and the forces at work there are fatefully reshaping our world, as a decade of research has shown us, and as the reader will hopefully come to see in the pages to come.

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