



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures  
Polish Academy of Sciences



ACTA ASIATICA  
VARSOVIENSIA  
No. 32

Warsaw 2019

*Editor-in-Chief*

NICOLAS LEVI

*Editorial Assistant*

IGOR DOBRZENIECKI

*English Text Consultant*

JO HARPER

*Subject Editor*

KAROLINA ZIELIŃSKA

*Board of Advisory Editors*

ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI

MING-HUEI LEE

THUAN NGUYEN QUANG

KENNETH OLENIK

JOLANTA

SIERAKOWSKA-DYNDO

BOGDAN SKŁADANEK

HAIPENG ZHANG

*Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia no. 32 was granted a financial support of the  
Ministry of Science and Higher Education, grant no. 709/P-DUN/2019*

© Copyright by Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,  
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2019

PL ISSN 0860–6102

eISSN 2449–8653

ISBN 978–83–7452–091–1

# Contents

## ARTICLES:

- **ROBERT WINSTANLEY-CHESTERS:** Forests in Pyongyang's web of life: trees, history and politics in North Korea ..... 5
- **LARISA ZABROVSKAIA:** Russia's position on Korean conceptions of reunification..... 25
- **BILL STREIFER, IREK SABITOV:** Vindicating the USS Swordfish..... 43
- **NATALIA KIM:** Discourse on motherhood and childrearing: the role of women in North Korea ..... 61
- **ROSA MARIA RODRIGUO CALVO:** Parallel development and humanitarian crisis in North Korea, a case of extremes ..... 81
- **NICOLAS LEVI:** A historical approach to the leadership of the Organisation and Guidance Department of the Workers' Party of Korea ..... 99
- **IGOR DOBRZENIECKI:** Juche ideology in Africa: its origins & development.....117

## BOOKS REVIEWS:

- Grażyna Strnad. *Korea. Polityka Południa wobec Północy w latach 1948–2008, Zmiana i kontynuacja*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2014, 600 pages, ISBN: 978-6361736-49-3  
– rev. Stanisław Tokarski ..... 139
- Ra Jong-yil. *The Rise and Sudden Fall of JANG SONG-THAEK*  
– Albany: Suny Press, 2019, 200 pages. ISBN: 978-143847372-7  
– rev. Nicolas Levi ..... 143
- Editorial principles..... 147



## BOOK REVIEW

**Grażyna Strnad. *Korea. Polityka Południa wobec Północy w latach 1948-2008, Zmiana i kontynuacja*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2014, 600 pages, ISBN: 978-6361736-49-3**

Up to the end of World War II and for more than 1280 years the Korean Peninsula had usually been a territory of a single unified country. Modern times have brought significant changes. After 35 years of Japanese occupation and US victories in Pacific arena, in 1945 Korea was divided into two occupation zones controlled by US in the South and Soviet Union in the North. Three years later, during the Cold War and increasing rivalries between the Eastern and Western blocs, these two zones were proclaimed two states: the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). During this period, peaceful interactions between the two Koreas were limited and a double political identity dominated the single ethnic identity. Two armies speaking the same language started a long war.

This book by Grażyna Strnad does not reconstruct this disastrous story but is a critical review of the profound changes since the end of Cold War that have shaped the politics of South Korea towards the North, shifting from a policy of confrontation to a policy of dialogue with confrontations elements. Such evolutionary elements are carefully studied across nine chapters, completed by a broad but wisely selected bibliography (pp 518-582), several maps and some important indexes. Over its 600 pages we find a critical account of barriers and lost possibilities preventing the unification of two countries – missing opportunities used in the case of Germany and other divided territories.

The main research hypothesis of this study is the assertion that the character of South Korean policy towards North Korea has been conditioned by the changing identity of the South Korean state. The author of this monograph points at growing democratisation of the South, together with a growing totalitarian system in the North. She recognises that identity plays a decisive role in shaping the policy of the South towards the North. In order to analyse

the policy changes in this work, a state-centered paradigm and a nation-centered paradigm establish two distinctive points of view and are very useful for studying two perspectives of change.

Because South Korean policy towards the North exhibits a conflict between the two identities, ethnic and political, the author employs a concept of identity dualism. Both paradigms are certainly not mutually exclusive. Significant changes in the political system of South Korea and the collapse of a trend that aimed at continuity of policy, combined with domestic economic problems, suggest that author's approach has been useful, even today.

The state-centered paradigm emphasises that relations consists of mutually antagonists identities, and therefore South Korea's alliance with the US, based on anti-communist ideology, is underscored. It assumes that relations between the two Koreas should be conceptualised as relations between the two sovereign states. As a consequence such relations consist of mutually antagonist identities.

In turn, the nation-centered ideology assumes that the relationship between two Koreas constitutes a single character predicated on shared ethnic identity. Such an approach emphasises the priority of policy of reconciliation, dialog and cooperation because inter-Korean policies are primarily an internal problem as the two Koreas constitute a single and ethnic homogeneous nation.

The account of the status quo of two Koreas today consists of three parts seen from the direction of the South. The first is concerned with historical identity determinants, mythology, history and culture. Mixed up with the sociopolitical situation of Korea prior to liberation in 1945, and prewar conditions, such a multidisciplinary approach helps the author explain the main dilemma of independence for the two countries. Particular emphasis has been posed on categorical net, especially the notions of national identity, nation and nationalism.

The second part of the book has been concerned with the politics of confrontation in the period of authoritarian rule. The author examines the origins of anti-communist policy in the South Korean state under the Japanese occupation then during the period 1948-1988, during the rule of Syngman Rhee, Park Chung Hee, Chun Doo Hwan. Those trends were based on an antagonistic orientation towards the North built up after the Korean War. The first overtures of the dialogue started during the rule of Park Chung Hede with the signing the July 4 Agreement in 1972. Doo Hwan continued diplomatic steps of peaceful dialogue prior to 1988 Olympic Games, in order to build up the international position of South Korea.

In the third part of the book the author undertakes a critical analysis of the politics of dialogue and reconciliation during the period of democratisation, paying special attention to the presidential administrations of Roh Tae Woo, Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun. This is the period of the post-Cold War and South Korea's democratic transition and consolidation. Such a situation enabled the increasing politics of dialogue, cooperation and economic exchange between the two Koreas. As the final result, in 1994 the Roh government proclaimed the National Community Unification Formula built on the foundations of Geneva Framework Agreement of the US and North Korea. It was followed by exports of south Korean goods to the North and economic exchange, iron, coal, crude oil from the North and so on.

The last but not least analysis of the book is connected with events such as the North Korean food crisis and the crash in the rapid development of some Asian Tigers. As a result, North Korea built up some very modern military equipment and made experiments with atomic bombs and long distance missiles.

Such a strategy increased the role of the North Korean Army in the economy of the country and built up the international role of Kim, meeting with such important people as Donald Trump, which was also one cause of a cooling in good relations between the South and North. The continuation of recent trends such as military threats in the last decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are not been the object of Strnad's research. Her line of scientific inquiry stopped some years ago, in 2010. But the questions posed in this book are as valid as ever. For those and many other reasons I strongly recommend this lecture, with its comprehensive reflections.

Stanisław Tokarski

