

The Geopolitical Perceptions of Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee: Focusing on the Period of Japanese Occupation*

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This paper compares the geopolitical perceptions of Syngman Rhee (Yi Süngman) and Kim Ku. The major findings are as follows. First, during the period of the Taehan Empire, Rhee and Kim had cast off their old Sino-centric geopolitical perceptions and embraced the concept of sovereignty. Protestantism, which was crucial to the rise of the modern conception of sovereignty, certainly played a role in the establishment of Rhee and Kim's perceptions. Second, during the period in which the Korean Provisional Government experienced internal conflicts over whether to partner with the Russian Communists, Kim and Rhee were both wary of the expansion of Soviet influence. Third, during the Asia-Pacific War, Rhee and Kim advocated a united front with China (Asia) and the U.S. (Pacific) against Japan's geopolitical scheme of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Fourth, Rhee focused on the strength and value of the U.S., which was expanding into the Pacific, and relegated China to the role of a secondary collaborator. In contrast, Kim valued highly the symbiotic relationship with China. Fifth, Rhee had a keen understanding of the global milieu but his senses were relatively dull to the revolutionary atmosphere of the Eurasian continent including Asia. On the other hand, Kim's perception of the world was relatively narrow but he was more sensitive to the revolutionary atmosphere of the Eurasian continent. Sixth, as the Cold War escalated and the two camps jockeyed to keep the Korean Peninsula within their respective spheres of influence (in traditional geopolitical terms, continental versus maritime), the differences in two men's geopolitical perceptions began to take center stage rather than their similarities. Despite these differences, the similar geopolitical perceptions shared by these two men, who contributed to the independence and founding of Korea, can provide a cornerstone for the geopolitical strategy of a 21st century Korea working to balance its continental and maritime priorities and continuing to face the problem of the North-South division.

* Translated from the published article in *Korean Political Science Review* 43(3): 51-75, 2009 with permission from the The Korean Political Science Association.

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Keywords: Kim Ku, Syngman Rhee, geopolitical perception, geopolitics, TaehanCheguk (the Great Han Empire), TaehanMinguk (the Republic of Korea)

I. INTRODUCTION

This study provides a comparative analysis of the geopolitical perceptions of Syngman Rhee (Yi Sŭngman, 1875-1965) and Kim Ku (1876-1949). We conceptualize geopolitical perception as a way of seeing the world that an individual has vis-à-vis the temporal and spatial milieu surrounding on self and that one had developed due to that milieu.¹ This concept is part of the wider corpus of geopolitics which has been developed by scholars such as John Rudolph Kjellén (1864-1922), Halford J. Mackinder (1861-1947), and Alfred T. Mahan (1840-1914). More recent understandings of geopolitics tend toward post-modern and decentralized conceptualizations (Flint 2006; Lacost 2006; Chauprade 2007). Similar viewpoints have also been articulated in traditional Korean scholarship; Hong Taeyong (1731-1783), a scholar of the Northern Learning School (北學派) in late Chosŏn Korea, proposed that the concepts of center and periphery are meaningless in an unbounded space and consequently argued against the “civilized/barbarian” Sino-centric view

¹ “Geopolitical perception” may be distinguished from “foreign perception” or “perception on international politics,” since it takes into account the interaction between individuals and their geopolitical milieus and does not clearly distinguish between subject and object. Other researchers have used the term “foreign perception,” which delineates “in” and “out,” but they have run into the problem of where to draw the line separating the two. In particular, there is little consensus on where that line was during the period of Japanese rule. Geopolitical perception is distinct from “perception on international politics,” which is fundamentally about interstate relations, since geopolitical perception concerns the perception formed as a result of the interaction between an individual and the concentric strata which surround him. Consequently, an analysis of geopolitical perception is not only concerned with the way an individual’s political thinking is shaped by considerations of nation and state, but also those arising from history, religion and language. It takes an anthropological stance to look at how such factors shape “the whole man” in the community of being (*seinsverbundenheit*).

of geopolitics (Hong, T. 2008: 158-62).²

This study focuses specifically on the geopolitical perceptions of Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku for the following reasons. First, because of their status as founding fathers, a comparative understanding of Rhee and Kim's geopolitical perceptions is essential to molding future Korean geopolitical strategy. Not only were they significant figures in the Taehan Empire (*Taehan cheguk*), the Korean Provisional Government (*Taehan min'guk imsi chǒngbu*) and the Republic of Korea, their political significance will be also immeasurably important in the future of two Koreas. Rhee began his political activities as a young member of the Independence Club (*Tongnip hyǒphoe*) and became the first president of the Korean Provisional Government in 1919. He later became the first president of the Republic of Korea in 1948. Kim's political activities began as a member of the New People's Association (*Sinminhoe*), which officially proclaimed republic government, advocating Enlightenment movement, and he also served as head of the Korean Provisional Government. After liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, he and Rhee led opposition against the establishment of a Soviet-style communist government, thereby contributing to the establishment of the Republic of Korea. Though his efforts for establishing a unified government through the compromise between North and South Korea, held April 19-30, 1948, in P'yŏngyang, failed, Kim will be remembered for his commitment to the ideal of peaceful unification. For that ideal is clearly stipulated in the preamble of the Korean Constitution (Doh, J. 2003: 239-42).

Second, previous researches has mainly compared and contrasted the two men as "political leaders of Korea," within the context of rather specific geopolitical space, namely, the Korean Peninsula.³ Moreover, evaluations

² Hong, Tae Yong claimed that those sub-entities which had been under Sino-centric order and content with its rule could themselves each be a center: "Every spiritual thing borne by the sky and raised by the earth is a human being. All those who rise above the herd to rule are princes. All those who raise walls and dig moats to protect their borders are nations" (Hong, T. 2008: 158-9).

³ Son, Se Il has already conducted a comparative study of Rhee and Kim (Son, S. 1970). This study examined the relationship between "place and political orientation," and provided valuable inspiration for this project. Doh, Jin Soon has looked at Korean politics between 1945 and 1949 with a focus on Kim and Rhee (Doh, J. 1997a). This

limiting the scope of their considerations to the Korean Peninsula or Republic of Korea have tended to focus on the split between Rhee and Kim over the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, thereby, leading to somewhat polemical controversy on the legitimacy of Republic of Korea.⁴ This study therefore not only examines the geopolitical perception of these two men vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula but also beyond that scope, an approach that more fully embodies their stories of conflict and collaboration in a wider context.

The method of “close reading” is employed to analyze the records and works of the two men, and relate their contents to the temporal and spatial milieu in which they lived. The comparisons can begin simply with the sheer gap of amount of records left by the two figures. Rhee was a renowned journalist of the Taehan Empire era and a Princeton Ph. D. Working from the U.S., he took advantage of his freedom of speech, using *Voice of America* broadcasts as well as writings in both Asian and Western languages to support the struggle for Korean sovereignty. Consequently, he left a large corpus that can be analyzed to better understand his geopolitical perception. Kim, however, was more action-oriented and operated under the harsh pursuit of the Japanese authorities in Asia, leaving few writings.⁵ Therefore, we will

study similarly brought into focus the global significance of Kim and Rhee in history.

⁴ In a debate held among scholars and the press on the 60th anniversary of the Republic of Korea (2008), Shin, Yong Ha asserted that the proposition that Kim had not participated in the establishment of Korea was a misconception. He argued that what Kim did not participate in, if anything, was the establishment of a ‘divided government.’ This seems to represent a mix of both positive valuations of Kim’s political legacy and reservations about Korea (Shin, Y. 2008: 157, 169). To learn more about the political and academic debate surrounding the use of Kim Ku’s likeness on the ₩100,000 bill, see the following: “10 man wŏn kwŏn amsal chiryŏng: P’yojŏk ūn Kim Ku” (“Order of assassination on the ₩100,000 bill: Kim Ku is the Target”), *Han’gyŏreh*, November 14, 2008.

⁵ The correspondence and various writings in mixed script of Rhee are included in *Ihwajang sojang Ungam Yi Sŭngman munsŏ tongmun p’yŏn* (18 volumes). His letters were also separately published in *Yi Sŭngman tongmun sŏhan chip* (3 volumes). In Korean, Rhee authored *Tongnip Chŏngsin* (*Independence-oriented thinking*, 1910) and *Han’guk kyohoe p’ippak* (*Persecution of the Korean church*, 1913), and he also translated *Chŏng-Il chŏng’ūi* (*The first Sino-Japanese War*, 1917) (these three works are included in the above compilations). In English, he wrote *Neutrality as Influenced by the United States* (1912), which was the book based on his doctoral dissertation, and *Japan Inside*

utilize his own works to the extent possible, but also rely on the recollections of his acquaintances, documents assumed to have influenced his perception, and his actual actions to indirectly indicate his geopolitical perception.

II. THE INITIAL FORMATION OF TWO MEN'S GEOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS

Born in 1875 and 1876 respectively, Rhee and Kim both spent more than twenty years of their lives as subjects, not citizens, of the Chosŏn Dynasty. Both Rhee, a scion of a fallen branch of the royal family, and Kim, who came from a ruined family of *yangban* origins and was treated as a low class commoner, entirely devoted themselves to preparing for the civil service examination in their early years. Under the rule of the Chosŏn Dynasty, the examination was the only road available to them to achieve upward social mobility.⁶ Rhee thought that “learning the Chinese classics, literature, history, culture, and religion and taking the examination” was his duty, and believed that “there is no religion superior to Confucianism.” When Kim first met the teacher of his village school (*sŏdang*), he considered him “a god or a sage.” (*Chŏngnyŏn Yi Sŭngman Chasŏjŏn*, 1995: 85; Kim, K. 2008: 53) After the Manchu invasion of 1636, Chosŏn was incorporated into the Qing-centered Sino-centric order of Northeast Asia, and the only way to become an elite intellectual in Chosŏn society was to gain expertise in the learning and philosophy that came in from China.⁷ During their early years, as with most

Out: The Challenge of Today (1941). Both English works are now available in Korean. Kim's *Paekpŏm ilgi* and *Towaesilgi* are both included in *Paekpŏm Kim Ku chŏnjip*, 12 volumes). Kim's works mainly report his personal experiences and actions, and are therefore of a different nature from the works of Rhee, which clearly express his political opinions.

⁶ Looking at the self-consciousness of the two individuals, Rhee had a “royal consciousness,” while Kim had “a commoner complex” (Son, S. 2008: 21-57). However, neither Kim nor Rhee was in the ruling class of Chosŏn society. No one in Rhee's family up to seven generations back had risen to government office or even passed the qualifying civil service examinations (Chŏng, P. 2005: 52).

⁷ Although Chosŏn society idealized the Ming Empire and looked down on the Qing Empire, Sino-centrism even toward the Qing remained. For example, Kim, Yun Sik

of their peers, the geopolitical perceptions of both Rhee and Kim were Sino-centric in nature.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki (下關條約), which ended the Qing-Japan War in 1895, stimulated an awareness of the modern perception of sovereignty among the people of Chosŏn by specifying in the first clause that “the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea.” In such a transitional milieu, the geopolitical perceptions of Rhee and Kim were transformed. While Rhee’s transformation was revolutionary, Kim went through a more gradual process of change involving much self-doubt and hesitation. Rhee joined the Hyöpsŏnghoe,⁸ an organization established by Philip Jaisohn (Sŏ, Chae P’il, 1864-1951), and went on to engage in political and journalistic activities in the Independence Club. The Independence was a kind of *zeitgeist* at that time, and that prevailing atmosphere was epitomized by the establishment of the Taehan Empire, which was proclaimed as the first modern sovereign state on the peninsula, on October 12, 1897. In the same year, when Rhee graduated from Pajai (Baejae) school, he gave a speech titled “the Independence of Korea,” similarly fitting in with the times (Han, H. 1976: 84-108; Kim, M. and Kim, S. 2008: 63-6).

During this period, Kim lived in hiding with An T’aehun (1862-1905), the father of An Chunggŭn (1879-1910), because of the role he played as a leader of the defeated Tonghak movement. Unlike Rhee who viewed the Qing-Japan War and the year 1895 in terms of the concept of independence (Rhee, S. 1993: 109-94), Kim actually experienced battle against Japanese forces during the Tonghak revolt. Kim’s studies of Tonghak philosophy formed the foundation of his geopolitical perceptions, which opposed Western imperialism in protecting the East.⁹

(1835-1922) considered the Qing Court the center of culture and a political power. As long as Confucian civilization remained, it mattered little whether the Manchus or the Han Chinese actually ruled China (Jang, I. 2002: 256-7).

⁸ Translator’s note (hereafter TN). The Hyöpsŏnghoe was a debating society that was a forerunner to the Independence Club.

⁹ Son Se Il thought that Tonghak, based on the principles of “anti-western, anti-Japanese, all people are equal (反洋反倭萬民平等),” was influential in the establishment of Kim’s nationalism (Son, S. 1970: 18). Prior to joining the Tonghak movement, Kim read the *Tonggyöng taejŏn* and *Yongdam yusa* (Kim, K. 2008: 69). Regarding his state

Kim intensified his anti-western perceptions through his studies of “clear away the false” (斥邪, *chöksa*) thought, even though Tonghak did not agree with the whole points of that philosophy except its anti-western element. During his time with An T’aehun, Kim met Ko Nüngsön, a Confucian scholar of the Hwasö school.¹⁰ Ko’s teaching of the Confucian idea of moral righteousness (義理) served to inspire Kim for the rest of his life (Kim, K. 2008: 100-6). Ko Nüngsön advised Kim to visit Qing China to find ways to save their country. Kim visited Qing twice and during his second visit, he met the son of Xu Yusheng, a general who died in the service of the Qing during the Qing-Japan War, and became his sworn brother near the Amnok (Ch., Yalu) River (Kim, K. 2008: 109-11, 123-5).¹¹ Kim’s efforts during this period to save his country through ties with the Qing were not irrelevant to his later efforts to support Korean sovereignty through close cooperation with China during the years of the independence movement and the Asia-Pacific War.

The transformation of Kim’s geopolitical perception occurred after the 1897 proclamation of the Taehan Empire. The new books he read while in his imprisonment at Inchön prison set him free from the conventional Sino-centric worldview. In particular, Kim found limitations to the lessons of Ko Nüngsön while reading books such as a translation of Robert MacKenzie’s

of mind when he joined the Tonghak movement, he stated: “When they told me, as I grieved over my plight as a commoner, that there is equality among those within Tonghak, and when I was told that there would be a new nation since the fate of the Chosön Dynasty was sealed, I was reminded of the grief I experienced taking the civil service examination” (Kim, K. 2008: 69). But later, Kim sometimes regretted his decision as “a folly, like chasing the wind” (Kim, K. 2008: 102).

¹⁰ TN. The Hwasö school was adamantly opposed to the opening of Korea and to the acceptance of Western thought.

¹¹ Doh Jinsoon states that Kim’s efforts to collaborate with the Qing Court were based on veneration of the Ming Empire and looked to the Qing in a realist light, only to borrow their strength. But as described in footnote seven, at that time, it was hard to differentiate between veneration aimed at the Ming and Qing Empires, and both were at the heart of Sino-centrism. The Hwasö school was sympathetic to the Qing Empire. For example, Yu In Sök (1842-1915) asserted that breaking off relations with the Qing and proclaiming independence were not matters to be celebrated but rather, mourned. Many Hwasö scholars even favored the despotic rule in Korea of Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) after the *Imo Kullan* (壬午軍亂, Military Mutiny of 1882) (Oh, Y. 1999: 230).

A History of the Nineteenth Century, and he consequently adopted the view that there were things to be learned from countries all around the world (Kim, K. 2008: 184).¹² Kim's epiphany in prison and change in geopolitical perception was very similar to the experience of Rhee described later in this paper (Lee, M. 2007: 60). Thenceforth, Kim regretted that he had ever considered breaking off his friendship with An T'aehun due to allegations by Ko Nüngsön that An had an interest in Western learning. He resolved to "learn loyalty from Confucian scholars but also the best cultural and institutional practices of countries around the world." The fact that Kim, having cut off his topknot, met Ko Nüng Sön, and refuted his views as followed remark, offers a clear proof to the magnitude of the change in Kim's geopolitical perception.

I told him of the state of the world as I learned from the books I had read and the unreasonableness of his philosophy of revering China and treating the Westerners as barbarians, and that we should not simply label as uncivilized barbarians those who have big noses and recessed eyes . . . How can we reject the barbarians of other countries when we can't even do the same with the barbarians in our country? Those countries across the sea are well-organized and civilized. Their regulations and institutions are more advanced, though they have never seen even the shadow of Confucius or Mencius . . . In my opinion, there are many things we should learn from the barbarians, and indeed many we should discard from Confucius and Mencius (Kim, K. 2008: 272-3).

Such statements clearly demonstrate Kim's desire to diverge from a Sino-centric geopolitical perception.¹³ Although Kim and Rhee had different trajectories, the establishment of the Taehan Empire in 1897 and accompanying social transformation incited in both a strong desire for independence from China.

For both Rhee and Kim, joining the Protestant church marked a shift in their perceptions of the world. Sino-centrism cast the emperor of China as

¹² Son Se Il also focuses on the influence of this translation of MacKenzie's book on the transformation of Kim's perceptions (Son, S. 2008: 439-48).

¹³ Lhee Hojeh has some reservation on this evaluation. He understands Kim's perception at this time as a postponement. He argues that Kim had left behind "the Confucian conception of a Sino-centric international political order," but did not have a "new conception of international order" which could replace it (Lhee, H. 1994: 353).

the 'Son of Heaven' and ranked the countries around China in a hierarchy with a strictness approaching that of a kind of religion. Protestantism lent great moral support to the cause of Korean independence because temporally it offered a better world to come beyond Sino-centric world and spatially it was directly related with the Western powers. Though Rhee sympathized with Philip Jaisohn and H. G. Appenzeller's (1858-1902) western political ideas from the outset, he initially rejected Protestantism, asking "How can an educated scholar believe such stupid dogmas when he already knows the great Buddha and the wisdom of Confucius?" (*Ch'ŏngnyŏn Yi Sŭngman Chasŏjŏn*, 1995: 86) However, he converted in 1899, while he was imprisoned at Han-sung prison. He stated that "although the teachings of Protestantism may not have been true, I firmly believed that they were uniquely able to change the hearts of our people, which had been so egoistic and self-centered as to be indifferent to the well-being of our compatriots" (Lee, J. 2002: 101). Rhee reconciled the ideals of Protestantism with those of independence. Protestantism led Rhee's geopolitical perception to encompass the system of sovereign states established by the Peace of Westphalia, which had been spreading since the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648 (Kim, M. and Kim, S. 2008: 81-2).¹⁴

Like Syngman Rhee, Kim Ku also accepted Protestantism after he experienced imprisonment, escape, a journey to the southern region of Korea, and the deaths of his father and fiancé. His entrance into the Protestant church was as important as his meeting with Ko Nŭngsŏn, in the sense that it was accompanied by intensive study of the Bible and training as a church leader. A Bible class in P'yŏngyang that Kim attended followed a strict religious training that taught doctrine and faith through a schedule comprising of "an early morning prayer meeting, breakfast, 30 minutes of worship, morning Bible study, lunch, afternoon bible study, choral lessons, spreading the Gospel, dinner, and an evening of discussion" (Kim, K. 2008: 285-8; Ok, S. 2001: 30-1; Choi, G. 2003: 33). The following statement from Kim demonstrates his synthesis of Protestantism and the ideal of

¹⁴ It can be argued that Protestantism itself is an evenness-friendly religion. The emergence and rise of Protestantism is often interpreted in the context of the "democratization of faith" (McGrath 2007: 52).

independence, similar to that of Rhee.

In P'yŏngan-do, and needless to mention Hwanghae-do, education reform began in *Yesugyo* (Jesus religion). Most people who supported cultural development were the followers of *Yesugyo*. People who had been exclusively concerned with bolting the door and maintaining tradition learned about the outside world from the tongues of western people. The followers of *Yesugyo* are mostly people of the middle class and therefore barely learned and foolish, but this only made it easier for them to learn from even the words of half-dumb missionaries; those who frequently listened not only learned faith but also patriotism. Therefore, it is an unavoidable truth that those who are patriotic are also the believers of *Yesugyo*. An old friend of mine, U Chongsŏ, was a missionary, and at his urging, I decided to devote myself to education reform and believe in *Yesu* (Jesus) after my mourning [for my father and fiancé] ended (Kim, K. 2008: 285).

Like Rhee, Protestantism not only provided a religious faith for Kim but also formed the ideological foundation that led to his new geopolitical perception. As Hong Taeyong before him, Kim acquired a geopolitical perception that can be thought of as concentric circles centered on oneself and one's own nation, rather than being fixed on traditional imperial subject-hood and the Central State (中國, China). Though the two men acquired their belief in independence through different experiences, the Protestantism helped consolidate the foundations of their ideologies.

Rhee and Kim's geopolitical perceptions were again transformed by the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). This was the consequence of intellectual efforts to discern what threats there were to Korea's sovereignty after the dissolution of the Sino-centric order.¹⁵ Rhee viewed Russia through the same pro-independence lens through which he had viewed the Qing Empire, and as a result, was persecuted by the royal circle of Korean government, which adopted a pro-Russia policy. Rhee's short interest in Japan's anti-Russian pan-

¹⁵ This refers to the perception of the threats posed by Russia and Japan, which arose after the fall of the Sino-centric order. Lee Hojeon asserts that the *Chŏn-Il ch'aeok*, written by Min Yŏng Hwan (1861-1905), is the first modern foreign policy work written by a Korean. He believes it to show that caution toward Russia and Japan has long been a part of Korean diplomacy.

Asianism, which was attractive to some Koreans, was associated with the geopolitical circumstances during this period (Oliver 2002: 59-60). His anti-Russian stance was strengthened through his readings and entrance into the Protestant church during his imprisonment. Rhee believed Russia's aggressive nature came from the Russian Orthodox Church, which had proclaimed imperial universality like Sino-centrism, and he believed that Russia's geopolitical ambitions toward Europe, which had been thwarted by the Crimean War (1853-1856), were now pointed at Asia (Lew, Y. 2002: 322-3). Even before the spread of Russian communism, Rhee viewed the expansion of the Russian empire with a vigilant stance.

Kim's anti-Russian geopolitical perception was similar to those of Rhee and other contemporary intellectual elites. The Tonghak movement, in which Kim once participated, considered Russia the most threatening invader of all external powers (Lhee, H. 1994: 59). It is also likely that Kim's geopolitical wariness toward Russia's territorial ambitions was strengthened by reading MacKenzie's book, which was covered with overtone of Russo-phobia.¹⁶ However, he was more suspicious of Japan than Russia. Kim, who had already directly expressed his hostility against Japan through his involvement in the Tonghak rebellion and the killing of Tsuchida Joryo, whom Kim suspected for his involvement in the assassination of Empress Myöngsöng (Queen Min), fled to Sajik-dong of Changnyön county after the Japanese occupation of P'yöngyang in 1904 (Kim, K. 2008: 661). He also started an anti-Japan demonstration and petition following the conclusion of the so-called Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905 (乙巳勒約).¹⁷ The persistent tendency that Kim kept a wary eye on Russia but an even more alert one on Japan is a theme that continued even into his post-1945 independence political orientation.

With the establishment of the Great Korea (Taehan) Empire in 1897,

¹⁶ The original version of *The 19th Century: A History*, on chapter five of the third book describes Russia as follows: "During this intervention period(from Peter the Great to Alexandre II), the history of Russia is a record of incessant expansion to all directions" (Mackenzie 1880: 379). The book reflects the Great Game between Britain and Russia. That is to say, there is clearly seen the cautiousness with which the British regarded Russia. Rhee also carefully read this book and his geopolitical perception was influenced by it (Lew, Y. 2002: 91-3).

¹⁷ Kim perceived Japan as consistently imperialistic both before and after WWII.

Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku firmly believed in Korean independence and Korean sovereignty. Rhee once offered a response to the popular notion that “the people of Chosŏn had been subjects of China for many years—so why independence now?” He argued that “independence allows people to avoid being treated as beasts, and adults being treated as children.”¹⁸ To enervated *yangban* and idle commoners, Kim issued a call to “wake up, whether *yangban* or commoner!” (Kim, K. 2008: 314-5) Rhee and Kim learned through Protestantism the reality of the geopolitical situation surrounding the newly born Great Korea Empire, and began to see with a vigilant stance threats from both land (Russia) and sea (Japan) following the dissolution of the Sino-centric regional order.

III. POLITICAL SPLIT WITHIN THE KOREAN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE TWO MEN’S GEOPOLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

Established in 1919, the Korean Provisional Government (*Taehan min’guk imsi chŏngbu*) embodied the spirit of national sovereignty envisioned in 1917 by the “Proclamation of Great Solidarity” and claimed legitimate succession to the Taehan Empire, as seen in the preservation of the name “Taehan” (Yun, D. 2006: 36-7). Through its struggles over the next twenty-seven years, the Provisional Government left an outstanding mark on the history of anti-colonialism worldwide.¹⁹ In the initial phase of the Government, Rhee and Kim walked together under the same cause, with Rhee becoming the first president of the Provisional Government in 1919, and Kim the Director General of the Police Bureau. During this period, Rhee operated in the U.S., warily watching the links between the U.S.’s “Open Door Policy” toward China and Japanese expansionism on the continent. Meanwhile, Kim operated in China, opposing communism, which was rapidly spreading on

¹⁸ “P’aemanghan nara tül üi tanghan kyölsil” (“The results of the defeated and ruined countries”), *Cheguk sinmun*, February 28, 1903.

¹⁹ Kim Hüi Gon argues that Korea through this process experienced a modernization equivalent to a civil revolution, which he calls “the theory of modernization through the independence movement” (Kim, H. 2009).

the Eurasian landmass, and keeping a hopeful eye on the Pacific. The activities of the two men reflect the commonalities in their geopolitical perceptions.²⁰

Rhee's geopolitical perception is well described in his doctoral dissertation, "Neutrality as Influenced by the United States."²¹ His proposal which was based on the core implication of his dissertation, that Korea should be made a mandated territory through the League of Nation under the U.S. leadership, became an ongoing issue of controversy and undermined his credibility to lead independence movement. However, at the time at least, the approach to recovering sovereignty through collaboration with the U.S. itself was the one adopted by the Provisional Government. It made sense that the Provisional Government gave more consideration to the U.S. than the Russia (later Soviet Union, 1922). The U.S. was emerging as a major world power both economically and politically, and was orchestrating the Paris Peace Conference (1919) as one of the victors of World War I, whereas Russia was suffering from devastating influence of post-revolution civil war (Manela 2007: 52-3). At that time, Kim was serving as police head, and wasn't as prominent as Rhee, An Ch'ang Ho (1878-1938), or Yi Tong Hwi (1873-1935), who were the top three leaders of the Provisional Government. But since the police of provisional government had the authority and even clout to exercise lethal force in the Shanghai French Concession (where the menacing force of Japanese secret service operated), by the 1920's Kim was considered by the Japanese police as one of the five most powerful men in the Korean Provisional Government (Kim, K. 2008: 467-8).

It is possible that Kim was antipathetic to the way that Rhee reduced the status of Provisional Government to a symbol, refusing to come to Shanghai and instead pursuing diplomatic activities through the Washington D.C.

²⁰ There is no way to know with certainty how Rhee and Kim perceived WWI at this time. In the case of Rhee, we have a passage from *Japan Inside Out* (1941) which states that the losers of the Paris Peace Conference were the democratic states that could not achieve cohesion, but this critique was written after the outbreak of WWII with the advantage of hindsight, and cannot be taken as reflecting his views at the time in question.

²¹ In this piece, Rhee concludes that the most important problems to be resolved with American influence were "1) the approval of independence, 2) the inviolability of the sovereignty of neutral states, 3) freedom of neutral trade" (Rhee 2000: 145).

based Korean Commission (Sin, P. 2003: 372-4). But Kim still aligned himself with Rhee's pro-U.S. line rather than the pro-Russia stance of Yi Tonghwi. This is clearly seen in his refusal to join the Korean Communist Party²² in Shanghai, despite the request of Yi Tonghwi. He not only refused the request but issued the following stern warning to Yi, who was then the Prime Minister:

I asked in response, "Will we be able to lead a communist revolution by ourselves without the orders or guidance of the 3rd International?" Yi answered in the negative and said it was impossible. I told him firmly, "an independence movement without Korean identity, under the orders of the 3rd Comintern, is a meaningless movement without self-respect. Your call runs counter to the charter of the Korean Provisional Government, and it is definitely wrong. I cannot follow your guidance. I politely ask you to be more self-restraining" (Kim, K. 2008: 473-4).

Kim's geopolitical perception can be seen in the conflicts surrounding the three big issues at that time, namely, Convention of National Representatives (Shanghai), the Washington Naval Conference (Washington), and the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East (Moscow), all held during the years 1921 and 1922. The Washington Conference, held from November 1921 to February 1922, launched the Washington Treaty System, composed of (among other things) the Nine-Power Treaty aimed at the preservation of Chinese territorial integrity, the "Open Door Policy," and the Four-Power Treaty, which replaced the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The Washington Treaty System achieved a kind of compromise or interim solution in the struggle between the U.S. and Japan over supremacy in the Pacific under a multilateral framework. An effort by Rhee and his Korean Commission to raise the Korea problem during the conference was not successful, and Rhee's pro-U.S. foreign policy was seen to have irrevocably failed (Ko, J. 2006: 23). Kim Kyu Sik (1881-1950), who had worked with Rhee in the Korean Commission, also began to advocate a position that was anti-U.S. and pro-Soviet. Furthermore,

²² The Korean Communist Party of Shanghai was established in 1920 in Shanghai and held as its objectives the followings: organizing a unified Korean Communist Party and the recognition by the Comintern (Lim, K. 2004: 194-205).

Kim Kyu Sik participated in the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East, and criticized the U.S. for unmasking itself and entering into a treaty with the exploitative nations of England, France, and Japan, “Bloodsucker nations” (Kim, K. 1922: 137-47).²³ Demanding a pro-Soviet realignment and adjustment of political orientation in the government, which had begun in 1921, and concurrent calls for Syngman Rhee’s resignation and reconstruction of the Korean Provisional Government were only strengthened following the conference in Moscow. There was severe conflict between the reconstruct faction (改造派), which advocated the reformation and expansion of the Korean Provisional Government, and a more radical faction (創造派), which advocated the complete dissolution of the Korean Provisional Government in favor of a new government. Eventually, the radical faction broke off, chartered a new separate government, and moved to Vladivostok to seek support and approval from the Soviet Union, but ended up a failure (Yun, Y. 2006: 202-4, 220-7).

During this time, Kim was included in a faction that defended the Korean Provisional Government and was considered “an absolute supporter of the provisional government in fully putting his trust on the current president and his cabinet members” (Yun, D. 2006: 205).²⁴ When Yŏ, Un Hyŏng (1886-1947) attended the Moscow Conference in 1922, Kim resigned his membership in the New Korea Youth Association (Sinhan chŏngnyŏndang) which had been launched by Yŏ.

Kim also thought that those who advocated the Convention of National Representatives were sponsored by Moscow. Once he became Minister of the Interior for the Provisional Government, his first decree was an immediate dissolution of the Convention of National Representatives (Kim, K. 2008:

²³ The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East was held in Moscow January 21, 1921 to February 2, 1922. As representative of the Korean delegation, Kim, Kyu Sik gave a speech in which he sharply contrasted the U.S. and Russia (Lim, K. 2004: 523). However, after he witnessed the realities of Soviet tyranny, he left behind his pro-Communist stance (Lee, C. 1974: 88-9).

²⁴ Kim told Pak, Ŭn Sik (1859-1925), who was advocating the Convention of National Representatives, that “if you go ahead with the Convention of National Representatives, you will become a bigger enemy of the people than Yi, Wan Yong” (Paekpŏm chŏnjip p’yŏnch’an wiwŏnhoe 1982: 127).

475-7). Kim did not sympathize with the effort to incriminate and dismiss Rhee in 1925.²⁵ Some of anti-Rhee element in the government who did argued as follows:

The purpose of diplomacy is to further the interests of one's nation through negotiations with other countries. Taking this into consideration, a country in our situation should have chosen China, small other nations, the Soviet Union and the 3rd International as the primary targets of our diplomacy, since they are also suffering from and stand against aggressive capitalism and imperialism. There are other world powers such as the U.S., Great Britain, and France who are fighting Japan for their rights and interests in China and the Pacific but they can be no more than a secondary consideration for us. However, Rhee considered the Soviet Union a threat because it is red and China not an option because it is weak, holding only the U.S. [in high esteem] as the sky in servitude because it is white and strong. But I have yet to hear of any support from the U.S. for our national independence movement.²⁶

Pak, Ŭn Sik, who succeeded Rhee as President of the Provisional Government, emphasized a geopolitical strategy, which embodied perceptions such as the one above, involving alliances with China, the Soviet Union, and India. Pak, Ŭn Sik thought that through its successful revolution, Russia had gone from aggressive expansionism to republicanism (Im, K. 2004: 44). Based on such perceptions, Pak, Ŭn Sik argued as follows:

Our independence movement must move of our own will, our own words, and with the collaboration of 400 million Chinese, 150 million Russians, and 300 million Indians, so that we may improve our people's knowledge, arouse

²⁵ It appears that at this time, Kim, along with Cho Soang (1887-1958) and others, corresponded with Rhee to discuss a series of measures to prevent the outbreak of chaos in the provisional government. Rhee replied to Kim as follows: "Through the exchange of several letters with Cho Soang, we knew that you were doing your best with us. I had long hoped to share words with you, so thank you for writing me first. The long-sighted plan you showed us is definitely one we must implement, but which we cannot being without financial support" (Yu, Y. et al. 2009: 10-1).

²⁶ "Yi Sŭngman kun ege irŏn ŭl yŏ hanora" ("A word to Mr. Rhee Syngman"), *Tongnip sinmun*, March 31, 1925.

sympathy around the world, and pose a threat to our enemies.²⁷

Thus, the impeachment of Rhee in Shanghai occurred against the backdrop of conflicting geopolitical perceptions, with a U.S. and Pacific-centric viewpoint on the one hand, and another focusing on Russia, China, India, and other countries on the Eurasian continent instead of Western powers.²⁸ In the midst of this heating controversy, the fact that the geopolitical perceptions of Kim and Rhee were in accord has significant implication. What made this accordance possible?

First, from Kim's point of view, in order to deal with the financial difficulties of the Provisional Government, it was necessary to get funding from countrymen living overseas in America, who were relatively prosperous. Kim had seen how the pernicious internal struggle caused by financial support from Moscow contributed to the disunion of the Provisional Government by promoting the factionalism of Yi Tonghwi and his followers. Therefore, Kim believed that severing relations with western societies would undermine the practical and financial foundations of the Provisional Government, since they were operating in the international city of Shanghai.

Around the time of President Rhee's inauguration, many Chinese and even western people with their blue eyes and big noses sought out the Korean Provisional Government, but now, no one comes by We could not but place the fate of the Korean Provisional Government in the hands of brothers overseas There are tens of thousands of Koreans living in America, Hawaii, Mexico, and Cuba, and though they were mostly laborers, at least their hearts were full of the patriotism they had been taught by Philip Jaisohn, Dr. Rhee, An Ch'angho, and Pak Yongman (Kim, K. 2008: 490-1, 494).

Second, it was the Soviet Union, rather than the U.S., which provoked anti-western sentiments in Kim while he was operating in China. At the time,

²⁷ "Tongnip undong üi tae pangch'im ül pujinham" ("Unable to advance the independence movement"), *Tongnip sinmun*, October 21, 1925.

²⁸ That even An Ch'ang Ho, who was by no means a socialist, in 1921 began supporting the coalition of Korea, China, and the Red Russia against Japan, was a sign of the times (Yi, A. 1999: 23-7).

Lenin was planning to harness the energy of colonized peoples in Asia to compensate for the falling off of revolutionary fervor in 1920s Europe (Carrère d'Encausse 1985: 15-9). This Soviet operation fed into the anti-Russian sentiments that Kim had harbored since the time of the Taehan Empire. Kim could not speak English, nor could he speak Chinese. With the Chinese he was at least able to communicate in writing, but even this was not possible with the Russians. This was in a similar vein to Kim's later views that blind obedience toward Soviet Communism was flunkeyism.

Our people's sad fate is the product of worshipping flunkeyism. No one was concerned with the people's happiness and the nation's interest. We preferred to fight for centuries to strengthen the theories of Zhu Xi, while our own national spirit withered away. The only thing we developed is a reliance on others, so how could we not face ruin Those who sneered at the blind followers of Chengzi (Cheng Yi) and Zhu Xi are now the ones who blindly follow Lenin. Immature Koreans must come to their senses (Kim, K. 2008: 541).

In contrast to Rhee who operated in America, Kim's sphere of influence was in Eurasia, but his geopolitical perception was not confined to that continental framework.

IV. THE ASIA-PACIFIC WAR AND THE TWO MEN'S GEOPOLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

The history of the Asia-Pacific War, which started in turmoil of Manchu and China in 1930s and ended in the demise of the Japanese Empire in 1945, brought a convergence of the geopolitical perceptions of the two men who had been working for Korean independence on opposite sides of the Pacific.²⁹ Kim thought that there would be an all-out war between China and Japan, which would eventually result in Korea's restoration of sovereignty. This was consistent with the geopolitical perception that Kim acquired while he was

²⁹ This paper refers to the war which occurred in the Pacific and on the Asian mainland from 1937 to 1945 as the "Asia-Pacific War" (Kim, M. 2009: 75-81).

traveling in Qing China following the Qing-Japan War (1894-1895). Kim's view on an all-out war between China and Japan was also convergent with Rhee's life-long prediction of the "inevitability of war between the U.S. and Japan." This was because Kim believed that a China-Japan war would certainly expand into a world war in which Japan would be defeated (The Association of Commemorative Service for Kim Koo Scholarship ed., 1982: 235, 249-50; Namp'a Pak Ch'anik chŏngi kanhaeng wiwŏnhoe 1989: 205, 232).

In spite of severe financial hardship, Kim was preparing some funds from Koreans residing in America for an "impressive undertaking" (Kim, K. 2008: 493, 498).³⁰ For Kim, the Manchurian Incident (1931) was a harbinger of war between China and Japan. What Kim planned to do with the money from Koreans in America was to take advantage of the opportunities presented by a Sino-Japanese conflict to resolve the discord that Japan had sown between Korea and China (Kim, K. 2008: 502). The heroic activities of Yi Bong Chang, on January 8, 1932, and Yun Bong Gil, on April 29, 1932, were planned against this backdrop, and were extremely effective for that purpose. Their actions stimulated both moral and material support from Koreans in America (Kim, K. 2008: 505), and more importantly, gave impetus to serious collaboration between Kim and the Guomindang led by Chiang Kai-shek (Kim, K. 2008: 522-3).

After the patriotic martyrdom of Yun, Kim published *Towaesilgi*, in which he recounted the facts of the incident and prescribed a symbiotic relationship between Korea and China, drawing on the history of the 16th century Imjin War (1592-1598) to emphasize the bonds between the two countries:

Violent Japan's invasion of China was similar to their actions towards us India was a large country but was ruined, while Nepal lives on, despite its small size. This teaches us that the size of a country does not determine its fate, but rather how hard its people are willing to fight China has lost its northeast but if its 400 million people resist without fear of death, its weakness

³⁰ During this time, Kim was "researching what would be useful to our people, and whether I would be able to do those things." He recalls that "coincidentally, several hundred dollars arrived from Hawaii. I hid it away in a money pouch in some raggedy clothes and continued living like a beggar, just as before. I was the only one that knew that there was over a thousand dollars hidden under these threadbare clothes."

can become strength and it can expect progress towards a desirable outcome. Our 30 million Koreans will support our allies with our hearts and bodies to chase out our foes. When Japan tried to invade Ming China through Korea, we refused their request and consequently, we suffered the ravages of war. But we were able to secure victory with the help of the Ming. It is clear that our relationship is one of mutual benefit, so called *Soon-chi* (脣齒, relationship between lips and teeth).³¹

The Yi and Yoon's activities which were mentioned above arranged by Kim were the outcomes of such a geopolitical perception. In his preface to the 1946 edition of *Towaesilgi*, Rhee who was generally skeptical to terrorism also opined that "the martyrdom of Yun was not a simple act of terror but an event that helped realize the alliance between the Guomindang and the Korean Provisional Government, an event of international significance that was felt even at the Cairo Conference" (The Association of Commemorative Service for Kim Koo Scholarship 1999: 667).

As the Manchurian Incident transformed into the Sino-Japanese War (1937) and the Asia-Pacific War (1941), the destinies of China and the U.S., as well as Korea's independence, became intertwined. As the Sino-Japanese conflict escalated, Kim authored a treatise titled "A Warning to the People of China" in which he stated that "China's entrance into the fight gave me and my comrades a chance to seek retribution for 29 years of grievance," and that "when China wins its fight, other weaker smaller nations will be able to gain strength from its victory and achieve freedom." He therefore urged cooperation between the Provisional Government and China in the struggle against Japan (Chu, H. 1972: 105).

Meanwhile, Rhee made assertions toward the Americans which were similar to what Kim said about the Chinese. In his book *Japan Inside Out*, written in 1941, prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Rhee stated that:

On the other hand, if the American people had seen Japan in 1894 and 1904

³¹ *Towaesilgi* is a booklet published by Kim in December 1932 to spread the word to the Chinese about Korea's anti-Japanese efforts. This book, which was first published in Chinese, was translated into Korean, slightly supplemented and republished in 1946 by Ōm Hangsöp (*Towaesilgi*, The Association of Commemorative Service for Kim Koo Scholarship ed., 1999: 662).

as they see her today, they would have looked askance at Japan's annexation of Korea, and would have tried to meet Japanese expansion of sea power, which now offers a powerful threat on the other side of the Pacific. ... Can you still believe the forest fire is far way? Can you still say, "Let the Koreans, the Manchurians, and the Chinese fight their own fight; it is none of our business"? ... With this in view, we will not interest ourselves in the Sino-Japanese conflict as a whole, but only in a certain phase of the conflict that affects foreigners in general and Americans in particular. ... It means just this: the Mikado in the East and the Fascist and Nazis in the West are bent on conquering the world. As they have great mechanized armies, they believe they are destined to rule the world (Rhee, S. 1941: 9-11).

Rhee's logic that what was happening in both east and west Eurasia was of relevance to U.S. national security, corresponded with the geopolitical logic of American realistic strategist, which opposed American isolationism and emphasize the threat posed by the Axis Powers (Iriye 2004: 164-9).

The second volume of *Paekpöm ilchi*, which Kim started writing in 1941, explains that Kim also observed the times from the point of view linking Asia and the Pacific.

Since the Provisional Government was established, we have made much effort on the diplomatic front, but have received no official aid, only informal, from the governments of China, the Soviet Union and the U.S. Now, however, President Roosevelt announced to the world that "Korea will become a fully independent country," and the Chinese President of the House, Sun Ke (孫科), during a public address commemorating the 23rd anniversary of the March 1st movement, argued that "the best solution for China to eliminate Japanese imperialism is to formally recognize the Korean Provisional Government." Additionally, the Provisional Government has established a foreign relations committee in Washington and placed Dr. Rhee as its chair to energize diplomatic and propaganda efforts (Kim, K. 2008: 451).

Kim absolutely supported Rhee in his leadership of the diplomatic efforts towards the U.S. as chair of the foreign relations committee during the Asia-Pacific War. Their solidarity, based on a common geopolitical perception, reached its climax during this time. Not only in the personal opinions of Rhee and Kim but also in the common view of Korean society in the U.S and

China, the grand trend of cooperation between the U.S. and China meant a truly “Asian-Pacific” War in geographical scope.³²

The convergence of the two men’s geopolitical perceptions reached a climax when Rhee appealed for help from those within Korea through the “Voice of America” broadcasts from June to July of 1942. American communications technology rendered both sides of the Pacific into a unified geopolitical theatre for the independence struggle. The U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) requested that Rhee make his broadcasts in an effort to incite a guerilla war by the Korean people against Japan (Lew, Y. 1996: 196). His broadcast began, “I am Syngman Rhee. I am speaking to my 23 million countrymen scattered both in and outside Korea.” He announced in the broadcast that the Korean Provisional Government in Chongqing and the Korean Gwangbok (literally, Light Restoration). Army were fighting Japan with financial support from America and the political support of the Guomindang.³³ Up to this time, Rhee had advocated diplomacy and careful preparation for an eventual conflict, while Kim had been mainly concerned about interference from the Soviet Union despite the importance he attached to military action. That Rhee agitated for a guerilla war through the broadcast signified the historically meaningful convergence of Rhee and Kim’s geopolitical perceptions.

³² The solidarity between Rhee and the Provisional Government in Chongqing signified an alliance of the non-communist nationalist between America and Asian continent. Syngman Rhee’s plans, which were passionately proposed from 1942 to 1943, for organizing Korean guerilla units, were the result of close consultation with Kim and signified the collaborative relationship and complete mutual trust between the two men (Jung, B. 2007: 295-332).

³³ The contents of this section are as follows. “Our provisional government is operating in Chongqing under the leadership of the patriots Kim Ku, Yi Siyǒng, Cho Wanku, Cho Soang. Our Restoration Army is led by generals such as Yi, Chǒng Chǒn, Kim, Yak San, Yu, Tong Yǒl, Cho, Sǒngh Wan who have established a headquarters and are fighting the enemy. With the support of Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, we have received the materiel needed by our army to be rightfully called the army of a sovereign nation. Our countrymen in the U.S., Hawaii, Mexico and Cuba continue to send us financial support. We will therefore be able to continue supplying our army with what it needs, so that day by day its members and courage will grow (VOA Broadcast, June 13, 1943; Rhee, S. 1993: 291-2).

At the same time, their geopolitical perceptions, which were so similar during the Asia-Pacific War, also had some differences. First was the perception on China. Since the time of his service as President of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, Rhee had understood pro-independence activities within China to be important but he considered them secondary to efforts involving the U.S. and the West.³⁴ As with his warning about the crisis of the “Open Door Policy” before the Asia-Pacific War, during the war Rhee approached it as an application of the Atlantic Charter to the Asia-Pacific region.³⁵ Overall, Rhee considered China secondary to the East Asia policy of the U.S.

On the other hand, Kim, while continuing to advocate autonomy *vis-à-vis* Guomindang, placed a high value on China’s influence on efforts to regain Korea’s sovereignty. Kim considered the Sino-Japanese War as a more important campaign than the one of Europe and the Pacific in World War II. Kim regarded the political situation of Asia (especially China), from where the Asia-Pacific War was originated, as the most vital factor in the worldwide political situation.³⁶ This can be seen in the fact that Kim welcomed Korea temporarily being included in the Chinese theatre (of operations) at the end of the war.³⁷ This reflected the urgent need of provisional government for the

³⁴ Regarding the division of labor between the provisional government and the Korean Commission, Rhee trumpeted the role played by the later which he had established (Ko, J. 2004: 213-7).

³⁵ These facts are clearly shown in the proceedings of the Korean Liberty Conference which was held February 27 to March 1, 1942 under the leadership of Rhee. (Cromwell, “Forward,” in Korean Liberty Conference, 1942, Hotel Lafayette, Washington D.C.). This provided a counterpoint to the anti-Western spirit of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japan, which proposed the aforementioned plan, did so in opposition to the 1943 Atlantic Charter, as a “Pacific Charter” (Kim, M. 2006: 219).

³⁶ Kim on August 25, 1940, in a statement titled “My support for Sino-Korean collaboration,” said the following: “China’s struggle is not only for China, but on behalf of the entire world” (Paekpöm haksurwön 2005: 100-1).

³⁷ In a congratulatory message to the American commander of the Chinese theater, A. C. Wedemeyer (1897-1989), Kim expressed his gratitude, saying that “including Korea in the Chinese theater is a farsighted decision both in terms of military and political strategy” (Taehan min’guk imsi chōngbu charyojip p’yōnch’an wiwōnhoe, volume 13, IV, 2006, 269). However, as a result of General Order No. 1, which went into effect March 15, 1945, Korea came under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Commander for

material assistance of the Guomintang government. It also reflected the risk of overdependence on the Guomintang by the Provisional Government. In fact, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), who Kim first met in 1933, emphasized an anti-Japanese line based on Sun Yat-sen's (1866-1925) *Three Principles of the People* (Kim, K. 2008: 544-5).³⁸ Later on, Kim and fellow government officials, while adjusting the "Nine Principles of the Restoration Army" issued by Chiang Kai-shek's Guomintang, did their best to maintain the independence of the Korean Gwangbok Army and the Provisional Government against Guomintang's persistent attempt to control their action. As early as 1942, as prospects of Chinese victory increased, the Chinese began pressuring the Provisional Government in ways that seemed to presage restoration to the historically subordinate relationship (Ku, D. 1995: 108). But efforts by the Korean Provisional Government to maintain independence from China were limited not only by the need for material support from China but also by considerations colored by the history of a symbiotic alliance (*Sunch'i ūi tongmaengnon*) (Han, S. 2006: 28-9).³⁹

Second were perceptions on the United States. In *Japan Inside Out*, Rhee framed Korea's loss of sovereignty in the historical contexts of the postwar settlement of the Russo-Japanese War, of WWI and the origins of WWII, and criticized the irresponsibility of the U.S. (Rhee, S. 1993: 217-28). Rhee's overall point, embodied in the final line of the book, "Let the United States act—and act now," was in the same spirit as the strategy of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) and his second administration (1937-1940),⁴⁰ which gradually

the Allied Powers, Douglas MacArthur, and his subordinate, John R. Hodge, who commanded the XXIV corps of the US Tenth Army.

³⁸ Sun Yat-sen repeatedly asserted that the territories of smaller countries in the region including Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam were lands that were to be recovered by China. Moreover, he asserted that though the losses of Taiwan and Indochina occurred in situations "beyond its control," the independence of Korea occurred when "China had no control," so the issue logically should be "reopened" (Bae, K. 2006: 238-50; Ku, D. 1995: 125). Korea's independence activists needed China's help to fight Japan and could only remain cautious against such geopolitical perceptions.

³⁹ Ko, Jung Hyoo has indicated that one of the reasons the Restoration Army could not closely collaborate with the American forces through the OSS was due to the subtle restrictions imposed by the Chinese provisional government (Ko, J. 2004: 453).

⁴⁰ The Roosevelt administration began in its second term to transform American foreign

put an end to American isolationism and began to envision spreading of U.S.-style democracy in Eurasia (Rhee, S. 1993: 252). Over time, Rhee's thinking evolved such that he considered it necessary to keep American influence on the peninsula even after the achievement of restoration. To the contrary, Kim's sentiments toward the U.S. were somewhat ambiguous. Certainly, the Provisional Government under Kim's leadership actively courted the U.S. in the pursuit of restoration, and understood the important role of the U.S. in the post-war world (Han, S. 2006: 26-7). Also, as described in *Na ūi sowŏn* (My Hope, 1947), Kim viewed U.S.-style democracy in a favorable light. But as shown above, his basic ideal was confined in "Eastern Way, Western Technology" (*Tongdo sŏgi*).

I do not advocate outright adoption of U.S.-style democracy. I was simply making a relative comparison between the despotic Soviet-style of democracy and the U.S.-style of democracy, which guarantees freedom of speech. I meant that if I had to choose one of the two, I would choose the one which guaranteed freedom of speech and ideas. I do not think that U.S.-style democracy is a perfect or complete political system. Just as in any other aspect of life, political systems also evolve. Moreover, a country like Korea which over the course of five thousand years has experienced many different systems of government will have had both defective and effective systems. Looking at the recent Chosŏn era, institutions such as the Office of Special Advisors, the Censorate, and the Inspector General that applied ideas arising from among the people to the conduct of government were great systems. Such systems and those like the civil service examination system and secret royal commissioners are worth studying. I believe that we can learn many useful things if we carefully examine the systems of past generations (Kim, K. 2005: 429-31).

policy from isolationism to participation on the world stage, once a certain amount of recovery from the economic crisis had been achieved (Iriye 2004: 131-69). In his "Quarantine Speech," delivered October 1937 in Chicago, Roosevelt did not explicitly name enemy states but did say that America must play a decisive role in an era marked by a "reign of terror and international lawlessness." This put an end to the isolationist foreign policy that he had followed since he assumed the presidency in 1933 (Divine 1981: 16).

Kim was also impressed by the wealth and power of the U.S. during the war.⁴¹ In Kim's view, Northeast Asia was an open space which should never be exclusively dominated by the Soviet Union or Japan. However, we can hardly say that Kim thought the U.S. should therefore remain a permanent presence in Asia.

Third was the perception on the Soviet and communism. The distrust between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communists eventually broke out into armed conflict during and after the end of the Asia-Pacific War. It is therefore hard to believe that the Provisional Government and the Korean Gwangbok Army, who were closely tied with Guomindang, deeply trusted communists, having seen such actual and pernicious confrontation.⁴² Kim understood communism as a form of dogmatic toadyism, and also a "fearful dictatorship" premised on thought control.

Among all dictatorships, the ones to be feared most are those based on ideology or philosophy Soviet-style democracy which the communists advocate is amongst these the most thorough, and exercises dictatorial practices to their utmost (Kim, K. 2005: 427-8).

Nevertheless, Kim's Korean Independence Party (*Han'guk tongniptang*), was strongly exhorted by the Guomindang during the period of the Second

⁴¹ Kim's perception that the U.S. military was stronger than the Japanese one was decisively confirmed as he observed the infiltration training program of the OSS (Kim, K. 2008: 602).

⁴² Even as collaboration earnestly progressed, Kim deeply mistrusted Kim Wönbong and his fellows for "outwardly supporting nationalism but internally advocating communism" (Kim, K. 2008: 550-1). This attitude is clearly seen in the recollections of those around him. Kim Jun Yop experienced the Chinese Civil War as well as a sneak attack on Guomindang forces by the 8th Route Army after the establishment of the Second United Front, and recalled that these stirred in him a deep interest in communism (Kim, J. 1989a: 214-5). In a conversation with Kim Ku after the North-South talks, one of his close lieutenants, Pak Ch'anik, stated that "as can be seen in the Second United Front, communists make gestures only to achieve their ends and are a sort with which there can be no compromise." Taking into account such statements, it does not seem likely that the left-right collaboration of the Korean Provisional Government was of transformative significance leading to a genuine cooperation (Namp'a Pak Ch'anik chöngi kanhaeng wiwönhoe 1989: 321).

United Front (國共合作) in China, collaborated with Kim Wŏnbong's (1898-1958) National Revolution Party (Minjok hyŏngmyŏngdang) across the ideological divide.⁴³ Even after the end of WWII, Kim still held reservations about the Soviet, but remained within the political orientation to construct a united Asian front against Japan.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Rhee was extremely wary of Soviet geopolitical expansion. Beginning in the 1920s, he argued that communism could undermine the national movement for sovereignty, leaving Korea to be taken advantage of by the Soviet, not to mention that he distrusted their economic policies as well.⁴⁵ Moreover, Rhee framed WWII as a conflict between democracy and totalitarianism, and categorized the Soviet Union as totalitarian. His perception mirrored the Western liberal point of view that fascism and communism were both part of the same broader category of totalitarian governments (Rhee, S. 1993: 241-52; Iriye 2004: 131-5). Lastly, Rhee thought that traditional geopolitical ambitions of Russia Empire were in resurgence by the rise of Soviet Union at the end of the war. The following is an excerpt from a message that Rhee sent to one of his followers:

My lifelong studies in international relations had dealt with Europe as well as with Asia. My travels in Europe also tended to sharpen my awareness of the significance of the trend of events in that part of the world. It was obvious that the nationalistic guerilla operating in southeastern Europe were themselves divided into two groups—communist and non-communist. When Roosevelt and Churchill agreed not to invade the European continent through the

⁴³ Kim simultaneously believed that collaboration with the left actually diminished the effectiveness of national identity (The Association of Commemorative Service for Kim Koo Scholarship ed. 1982: 297, 304).

⁴⁴ Looking at the record of independence in retrospect, Kim also worried about the encroachment of the Soviets onto the Korean Peninsula. However, this point of concern was confined to the peninsula (Kim, K. 1984: 46-7; Kim, J. 1989: 426). This attitude was clearly differed from Rhee's concern over the global meaning of Cold War.

⁴⁵ Refer to the following editorials, probably attributable to Rhee: "Kongsanjuüi üi tang pudang" ("the rights and wrongs of communism"), *T'aep'yŏngyang chapchi*, March, 1923; "Sahoe kongsanjuüi e taehaya" ("regarding social communism"), *T'aep'yŏngyang chapchi*, July, 1924.

Balkans, it was also apparent that an agreement had been reached to leave this area primarily to Soviet influence ... and in Poland the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland gave communism a great advantage for exploitation of Russia's design of expansion. ... It was evident that President Roosevelt's policy of 'unconditional surrender' by the Rome-Berlin-Japanese Axis was being paralleled by another policy of Allied acquiescence in the essential pattern of Russian imperialism (Oliver 1973: 197).⁴⁶

Harboring such perceptions, Rhee became famous as a "precocious Warrior of Cold War" by proclaiming at the San Francisco Conference (April-June 1945), where the charter of the United Nations was signed, that the post-war powers handed Korea over to Soviet influence in the Yalta secret agreements (Ko, J. 2004: 454-68). As the Asia-Pacific War came to a close, the anti-Russia geopolitical perception, which had existed during the Taehan Empire era, was resurrected anew in Rhee's thinking.⁴⁷

Fourth were perceptions on East Asia. The two men lived in different places: Rhee in the relatively stable America with its well-established institutions, and Kim in a turbulent Asia ruled by 'war and revolution.' As a result, there were differences in the way the two men perceived East Asia (Son, S. 1970: 41-52). Notwithstanding Truman's (1884-1972) somewhat proud reminiscence that "Our citizens were tightening their belts and making every sacrifice to help save the world from tyranny," (Truman 1955: 224) the U.S. was a stable place during WWII, where people could even experience prosperity.⁴⁸ Relatively speaking, the circumstances of the Korean Provisional Government in China were bleak. Kim stated that "while we were diehards

⁴⁶ This passage is quoted from Oliver's book in English. There is one mistake in the Korean translation of this book published in Konkuk University Press in 2002. The crux of this letter was that Russia's traditional expansionism was resurgent, so the phrase "Soviet imperialism" is inaccurate. The original states "Russian imperialism" as well, so it is more accurate to refer to it thusly.

⁴⁷ Shin Bok Ryong distinguishes between "anti-Russianism and anti-communism" in explaining the anti-communist stances of Kim and Rhee (Sin, B. 2003: 369-72).

⁴⁸ During WWII, the U.S. experienced an existence completely different from those of Asia and Europe. Regarding America's experience during the war, John Galbraith (1908-2006) states "in the history of warfare, there has never been so much talk of sacrifice without actual sacrifice" (Leffler 2007: 40).

even when we were in Shanghai, in Chongqing we were actually dying.” He also commented that his personal finances while in Shanghai were such that he was “a beggar even amongst beggars.” (Kim, K. 2008: 452, 485)⁴⁹

Living in the U.S. where the communists held little clout, except the spy ring including Alger Hiss, Rhee could refuse to collaborate with communists and flippantly say that “I would rather raise chickens in the countryside” (Oliver 2002: 224-225). For Kim, however, the dire straits faced by the Korean Provisional Government did not allow for such luxuries. Continually facing internecine ideological strife, the Provisional Government was described as having “more factions than the number of chairs in the building they were renting” (Chang, J. 1985: 207-9). Even though he did not follow communism and had no expectations of good will from the Soviet Union, while he was in China, which like Korea was undergoing “anti-feudal and anti-foreign” strife, he accepted the political climate, which was such that both nationalism and socialism had to be accepted as “competitive companions in the liberation of the people” (Yun, D. 2006: 268). Thus, Kim had to achieve collaboration across the ideological divide, a unique experience which Rhee did not have.⁵⁰ The post-war influence of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists expanded throughout Northeast Asia that included Korea. Rhee’s understanding of the American perspective was such that he foresaw the advent of the Cold War, but he was less attuned to the atmosphere of revolution in Asia.⁵¹ While Kim’s geopolitical perception was narrower in

⁴⁹ Kim Ku’s mother, Kwak Nag Wŏn (1859-1939), repeatedly entreated that he conduct his revolutionary activities from the U.S. since the situation in Shanghai was so difficult, but he refused, stating that “revolutionary activities cannot be conducted from a place of opulence” (The Association of Commemorative Service for Kim Koo Scholarship ed., 1982: 169).

⁵⁰ Choi Sang Yong opines that despite Kim’s firm anti-Soviet, anti-trusteeship stance after liberation, the action-oriented nationalist in him understood the potential of “national independence and independence-oriented left-right collaboration” (Choi, S. 1998: 169).

⁵¹ This is not to say that Rhee was ignorant of the revolutionary climate of Asia. He himself was a leader of an Asian people’s liberation movement, and had visited Russia twice; he knew full-well the revolutionary climate of Asia. Indeed, he understood the threat posed by this atmosphere which was being precipitated by Soviet influence. On this basis, during the independence movement and as the first

comparison, he was more sensitive to the revolutionary atmosphere of Korea and its environs.

V. CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study are as follows. First, during the time of the establishment of the Taehan Empire and the Qing-Japan War (1894-1895), Kim and Rhee both developed a sense of independence and moved away from a China-centered geopolitical perception. They strengthened their sense of independence by accepting the principle of national sovereignty and joining the Protestant church which had boosted the principle of Westphalian sovereignty in Europe. Both men, as leaders first of the Korean Provisional Government then the Republic of Korea, foresaw the historical significance of Korean sovereignty vis-à-vis international politics. But the different ways in which each obtained his sense of independence led to different geopolitical perceptions. Unlike Rhee who looked toward the Pacific, Kim maintained aspects of the perceptual framework that he learned from the Tonghak movement and the Hwasŏ school. Such differences could be seen in the different threats each saw to the sovereignty of Korea. Rhee saw Japan and Russia as the main threats that had entered the void left by the downfall of the Sino-centric regional order. Kim did acknowledge the Russian threat, but his hostility was mainly focused towards Japan.

Secondly, when the Provisional Government experienced conflict over the matter of collaboration with the Soviet Union, Kim and Rhee presented a united front. Kim refused to follow the Soviet Union which was exercising considerable influence over the mainland including China, while Rhee operated in the U.S., keeping his hopes focused toward the Pacific.

president of the Republic of Korea, he asserted that the U.S. must support and heed Asia more than ever. He criticized those in the U.S. with Atlantic-centered points of view, and agreed with those focusing on the Pacific (Oliver 1978: 67, 73, 101). In line with such views, Rhee, together with Chiang Kai-shek and Elpidio Quirino (1890-1956), president of the Philippines (1948-1953), in 1949 prior to the Korean War, began calling for a Pacific Pact similar to the North Atlantic Treaty (Kim, M. 2000: 127-54).

Third, the cooperation of Rhee and Kim during the Asia-Pacific War symbolized the geopolitical collaboration between China (Asia) and the U.S. (Pacific) against the Japanese ambitions for a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Rhee predicted that the United States' "Open Door Policy" toward China would collide with Japanese plans for a Greater East Asia. To the Americans, who had grown complacent behind the buffer provided by the Pacific, he warned of the danger of a war in Asia crossing the ocean and posing a threat to American national security. Meanwhile, Kim operated a successful semi-military campaign with the aid of men like Yi Bong Chang and Yun Bong Gil, established firm relations with China, and planned for active diplomacy toward the U.S. through Rhee.

Fourth, during the Asia-Pacific War, Rhee valued the might and worth of the U.S. foremost, considering China a secondary partner.⁵² On the other hand, Kim privileged the mutually beneficial relationship with China. Rhee focused on Russia's geopolitical ambitions, and the totalitarian nature of communism. He also foresaw the escalation of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Though Kim likewise rejected communism, he did so because he saw it as a form of toadyism. On the contrary to Rhee, Kim did not see it as such a main global divisive issue in the aftermath of World War II.

Fifth, Rhee's geopolitical perception formed in the stable environment of the U.S., and Kim's perception formed in the turbulent environment of China; each had its own strengths and weaknesses. Rhee had a broad perspective of the world but was less attuned to the atmosphere of revolution in Asia. While Kim's geopolitical perception was narrower in comparison, he was more sensitive to the revolutionary atmosphere of Korea and its environs.

⁵² In his book published in 2009, Bruce Cumings argues that the emergence of the U.S. as a world power followed on its transformation from an Atlantic-oriented U.S. to a Pacific-oriented U.S., and that this important "tipping point" in world history occurred at Pearl Harbor (Cumings 2009). Viewed from this perspective, Rhee, who was living in the U.S. during the Asia-Pacific War, foresaw the historic flow referred to by Cumings, and tried to put Korea atop this wave. Oliver opines that "if the importance of Asia continues to rise, future researchers will take greater interest in Rhee, who contributed to the westernization, modernization and democratization of this region, which occupies half the world" (Oliver 2002: 341).

Sixth, immediately after the end of World War II, Rhee and Kim collaborated in an anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and anti-trusteeship stance. But on August 15, 1948, when, as they had long hoped, the Republic of Korea finally assumed the mantle of sovereignty handed down from the Taehan Empire and the Provisional Government, the two men went their separate ways. As the Cold War escalated, more differences emerged between the two men's geopolitical perceptions. Those differences were evinced in their disagreement over a continental versus a maritime focus, since both sides wanted to keep the Korean Peninsula under their influence. For Rhee, who was serving as the first president of the Republic of Korea, the falling out with Kim was significant because the latter represented "those who are not wealthy," unlike Rhee (Gayn 1948: 434). It also signified the loss of his most powerful and trustful ally, who once argued that "the first president of a unified Korea must be Dr. Rhee," and one who shared his geopolitical perception (Sonu, J. 2009: 331). Despite these differences, the similar geopolitical perceptions shared by these two men, who contributed to the independence and founding of Korea, can provide a cornerstone for the geopolitical strategy of a 21st century Korea working to balance its continental and maritime priorities and continuing to face the problem of the North-South division.⁵³

⁵³ According to his son's witness, prior to his departing, for the North-South talks, Kim said the following: "You know the history of the Manchu invasion of 1636, right? Without the realism of Ch'oe Myǒnggil (1586-1647), who compromised with the Manchus, the nation would probably have fallen. Subsequent generations have said 'today, we cannot do without Myǒnggil; 100 years from now, we cannot do without the Samhaksa (three learned gentlemen who opposed negotiations with the Manchus, allying themselves with the Han Chinese);' they were referring to this sort of reasoning (*Kimsin chǔngǒn*, Cho, G. et al. 1987: 368). This indicates that even though Kim agreed to a certain extent with Rhee's proposal for the election of 1948 and understood the urgency of establishing a government in South Korea, he also wished to play a role which was of historical necessity. Such was Kim's quandary and his political legacy, one which Korea must fulfill, by both working towards unification, as mandated in the constitution, and building a more perfect nation-state.

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