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Negotiating On The Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior (Cross-Cultural Negotiation Books)



Synopsis

The ordeal of negotiating with North Koreans during the Cold War has left the impression of a "crazy" and "bizarre" diplomacy, of negotiators who insult and provoke their Western counterparts while fabricating crises and fomenting discord. As *Negotiating on the Edge* reveals, however, there is not only a method to this "madness" but also an ongoing shift toward a less provocative negotiating style. Drawing on interviews with an eminent cast of U.S. officials and marshalling extensive research on North Korea past and present, Scott Snyder traces the historical and cultural roots of North Korea's negotiating behavior and exposes the full range of tactics in its diplomatic arsenal. He explains why North Koreans behave as they do, and he argues that there is, in fact, an internal logic to what often seems to be outrageous conduct. Finally, Snyder explores how economic desperation and the end of the Cold War have forced North Korea to modify its negotiating style and objectives. Focusing on the U.S. negotiating experience with North Korea in the 1990s, Snyder also deals comparatively with recent South Korean and multilateral attempts to engage Pyongyang.

Book Information

Series: Cross-Cultural Negotiation Books

Paperback: 236 pages

Publisher: United States Institute of Peace (November 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1878379941

ISBN-13: 978-1878379948

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #513,851 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 in Books > History > Asia > Korea > North #1392 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Asian #7350 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Political Science

Customer Reviews

Snyder focuses a clear and steady light on the little understood topic of North Korean negotiating behavior. (Donald Oberdorfer, author of *The Two Koreas* and former Washington Post correspondent.) The best, and perhaps the only full fledged, analysis of North Korean negotiating

behavior and . . . an indispensable manual for those who have the tough luck of negotiating with the North Koreans or others, if any, who are like them. (Han Sung-Joo, Former South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Scott Snyder is a program officer in the Research and Studies Program of the United States Institute of Peace, where he has organized a working group on U.S. policy toward North Korea since 1994. Author of numerous articles, he has been an Abe fellow and a staff member at the Asia Society.

Scott Snyder's study of North Korea's post-Cold War negotiating style looks closely at the recurring patterns in the North's negotiating behavior and why they act as they do. While the book describes, in detail, negotiating situations during the last years of the life of Kim Il-sung and subsequent negotiations during the first few years of Kim Jung-il's reign, the principles and underlying rationale for North Korea's actions, even in 2013, remain the same. The best way to get value from this book is to first concentrate on the historical, cultural and political background of North Korea, then recognize patterns of past behavior and finally apply this to the new reign of Kim Jung-un. North Korea's behavior under Kim Jung-un may seem bizarre and even a bit unstable to those outside North Korea. But by using this book as a background blueprint, the Western reader can at least gain some insight into not only why the youngest Kim acts as he does but how he may act in the future.

This is a fascinating book for anyone who has an interest in this very specific topic. I'm sure the audience is a small one, as very few people ever have reason to do business or interact with the North Koreans. But it's a useful book, and there hasn't been much written in recent years that was specific to North Korean culture, which should not be confused in any way with South Koreans or their own unique culture, which is entirely different from their neighbors to the North.

A balanced and pragmatic analysis of North Korean negotiating perceptions and behavior, Snyder's book will be one of the most significant and useful studies of North Korea for years. His study ranges at all levels, thus we see analyses of both negotiating tactics as well as the cultural and psychological perceptions that inform those tactics. This book is highly recommended for anyone who wants a glimpse into North Korean decision making and thought, not just how they negotiate. The quasi-self-contained world of North Korea has generated a psychological perspective and mindframe that has its own internal rules of logic and acceptability. An understanding of that world,

and taking advantage of its contradictions and absurdities, is what makes this book all the more valuable. Policymakers, diplomats, media, scholars, and students will all find this a useful and informative tool. Snyder's well-written presentation of the unique mindset of North Korean actors helps us understand their motivations and behaviors beyond the "irrational and reclusive" mantra of years gone by.

Snyder analysed the actual patterns when both Koreas negotiated. According to him, the nature of the competition and level of distrust among north and south Korea is such that toughness and brinkmanship have been the preferred strategy, even in a bargaining situation where benefits may accrue to both sides. The communist tactics were attempts to load the agenda in order to create an environment for one-sided concessions. They dishonored commitments already made and applied a different interpretations to its content or significance. Negotiation was primarily used to as another form of competition. But when it comes to the Basic Agreement, there are bifurcated opinions about the real intention of the north. Anyway, it is clear that North Korea came to negotiation table only when there were any structural changes external to the Korean peninsula. And South Korea usually feel that only power can change the basic attitude of the North Korean style of negotiation. So they didn't like the way that U.S. showed when Americans directly negotiate with north Korea on the nuclear issues.

This book is one of the most important book in any respectable "Korea specialist" must have in his personal collection. Often times, North Korea is described by the media as "bizarre," "irrational," and "enigmatic." Snyder's book clearly refutes such characterizations of North Korea. Snyder describes in detailed and informative manner how the North Korean regime came to the negotiation table with well established agenda and tactics to put its negotiation counterparts on the defense to better serve its national interests. What seems to casual Western observers as disturbing behaviors of North Korean negotiators were well-crafted propaganda and political warfare tools that have characterized P'yongyang's strategy vis-a-vis the ROK-US alliance since the Korean War. It is only too bad that this book did not come out in the early 1990's when the North Korean regime held the world hostage with its refusal to allow full inspections of its nuclear facilities and program. Nevertheless, this is a landmark study of contemporary Korean issues.

The best way to understand North Korea's provocative behavior is to read "Negotiating on the Edge." Every time North Korea threatens to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire," it part of a tried-and-true

strategy to keep a precarious regime afloat and to get a voice in the international community. Pyongyang wants its population to be in a perpetual state of fear, mobilized for the next war and distracted from its own deprivation. Examining the history and culture of North Korea with a keen mind and years of experience, Snyder explains how North Korea always creates a crisis in order to solve a crisis. As relevant now as ever.

Many commentators fall back on North Korean irrationality, craziness, insanity etc. This book shows that North Korean behavior can be understood in an entirely rational framework. The North Koreans do have their moments, though. The anecdote about the negotiator trying to storm out of his own embassy was pretty funny.

South Korea, the United States and other countries have embarked on negotiations with North Korea. It is important to understand North Korea. Mr. Snyder's book is excellent at describing North Korean negotiating behavior, and the origins of their attitudes being Confucian and communist.

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