



Center for Korea Studies  
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# Who Is Korean? The Changes in the Boundaries of Koreans from the 1940s to the 1950s

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the development of South Korean nationalism from the 1940s to the 1950s focusing on the question of who was included in, and who was excluded from, the "imagined" boundaries of "Koreans." Specifically, by analyzing newspaper articles of *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-a Ilbo* from the establishment of the Korean government on August 15, 1948 to the 1950s, this paper will show that, as a result of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the ensuing consolidation of the division of Korea, the "imagined" boundaries of "Koreans" at the societal level have changed gradually from "inclusive" ones which include not only "South Koreans" but also "North Koreans" and overseas Koreans (such as Koreans in China, Koreans in the U.S.S.R. and Koreans in Japan) to "exclusive" ones which include "South Koreans" only. This suggests that, by imagining a new "imagined community" of South Koreans, the South Korean society has tried to implement the "nationalist principle" which demands the congruence between the national and the political boundaries.

Bumsoo Kim is an associate professor of the College of Liberal Studies at Seoul National University. He has published numerous articles and coauthored books such as *Conservatism and Representation in Post-War Japan and Political Theories of Human Rights: The Issues and Prospects of Contemporary Human Rights Discourses* (in Korean). His interests range widely from political theory (nationalism, multiculturalism, democracy, equality and justice) and ethnic and racial studies (group politics, identity politics, ethnic relations, immigration) to Japanese studies (domestic politics, foreign policy) and international relations (international relations theory, international relations in East Asia).

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