

# Monetary Policy and Central Banking in Korea

This study is among the first to examine the theory and practice of monetary policy in South Korea. Woosik Moon provides a detailed analysis of the central bank of South Korea, one of the most successful and important economies in Asia. He covers everything from monetary policy to inflation targeting and macroprudential regulation, explaining how these policy tools were used to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. He then brings his study into our current moment, speculating as to how the use of these policies will change in order to deal with the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic. This book offers in-depth investigations and the provision of the most up-to-date information about the Bank of Korea's monetary and financial actions, serving as essential reading for central bankers and professionals of financial markets around the world, as well as anyone interested in monetary policymaking.

WOOSIK MOON is Professor of Economics at the Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University. He was a member of the Monetary Policy Board of the Bank of Korea from 2012 to 2016.



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To Christian de Boissieu, my teacher at the University of Paris-I, who taught me money and banking.



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# Preface and Acknowledgements

Since the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, monetary policy all around the world has undergone tremendous changes, which have been accompanied by the emergence of new instruments and principles. Many unconventional principles that have emerged because of the unprecedented crisis in 2008 are being established as the new normal. The COVID-19 pandemic is again likely to accelerate this trend. Korea is no exception and thus requires new thinking on its monetary policymaking.

Despite an increasing interest in the topic, not just on the part of the Korean public, but also on the part of international readers, no serious academic work on monetary policy in Korea has been published to date. The only work available is a short brochure published by the Bank of Korea in 2016 under a similar title, 'Monetary Policy in Korea', which leaves out theoretical deliberations as well as topical policy issues and debates. In general, there seem to be very few studies available about the monetary policies of Asian central banks, let alone that of the Bank of Korea. This may be due to the relatively short history of 'independent central banking' in Asia. The market economy has yet to be firmly established in Korea and many parts of Asia. Policymaking in Korea has for a long time been nothing but a bureaucratic and discretionary practice, often lacking democratic principles and theoretical considerations. But, for an independent central bank, monetary policymaking can no longer continue to be formulated in this way. It requires transparent and independent decision-making based upon theoretical knowledge. This explains why there are so few studies on monetary policymaking, despite the strong interest expressed from both academia and professional financial circles.

In the face of this lacuna, it is the intention of this book to conduct a comprehensive examination of the current practice of monetary policymaking in Korea. More precisely, it aims at combining the real

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practice implemented by the Bank of Korea with the new theoretical principles of monetary policy. And here it cannot be overemphasised that monetary policymaking in Korea has evolved, to a great extent, in tandem with the development of the market economy. The Bank of Korea should, therefore, be a guardian of the market economy against any arbitrary intervention or interference on the part of the government. Based upon this perspective, this book tries to analyse monetary policy and central banking in Korea.

Of necessity, the book also addresses Korean monetary policy and central banking from a comparative perspective. Above all, the Bank of Korea, as well as the Monetary Policy Board as its decision-making body, was modelled on the Federal Reserve System of the United States. Furthermore, many current policy tools and practices were indebted to the policymaking of major central banks such as the Federal Reserve System, the European Central Bank, and the Bank of Japan. The main content of the book will be as follows.

First of all, the volume begins by asking about the goals and objectives of economic and monetary policies in Korea. When it comes to monetary policy, in particular, it seems that many in the Korean public are not clear about its counter-cyclical nature of stabilisation, in that the goal is always to reduce volatility, whether it be inflation or output (employment).

Part II looks at how money and monetary policy affect the Korean economy. The evolution of different monetary and credit instruments is reviewed and the transmission channels through which monetary policy affects price and output in Korea are analysed.

Part III discusses the different aspects of central banking and monetary policy in Korea. As the most important and the longest part of this book, it evaluates and examines the organisation and structure of the Bank of Korea, the strategies and operating principles of its monetary policy, the inflation targeting and interest rate-setting process, as well as the tools and instruments of its monetary policy. This part argues that the traditional view that the interest rate is determined by money supply and demand is no longer valid. Under the current corridor system, the interest rate in Korea is determined by the announcement of the Bank of Korea, as in many other central banks, regardless of the amount of reserve money. Under the zero interest rate lower bound, furthermore, managing yield curves is emerging as a more important future monetary operation for the



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Bank of Korea than its current short-term interest rate-setting operation.

Part IV deals with the issue of financial stability, especially macro-prudential policy. Korea was hit twice: first by the 1997 foreign exchange crisis, and then by the global financial crisis of 2008. These crises are not necessarily the result of market failure but are more often due to government failure. This part will examine the respective roles of the Korean government and Bank of Korea in the implementation of macro-prudential policy, given the latter's lack of sufficient policy tools. It will also cover the issue of the recent financial market stabilisation measures introduced to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, Part V briefly touches upon the possible future monetary policy operations and instruments available, given that the Korean economy is expected to record lacklustre economic growth accompanied by deflation. The outbreak of the 2008 global financial crisis and the spread of the COVID-19 virus will lead us to rethink the existing monetary policy framework. Against this backdrop, the Bank of Korea should strengthen its efforts to revamp its existing monetary policy tools and be prepared to manage the yield curve just like the Bank of Japan.

Given the dearth of comparable works on Korean monetary policy, it is my hope that this volume will provide anyone who is interested in monetary policymaking with a valuable in-depth analysis and the most up-to-date information on the Bank of Korea's monetary and financial policies.

This book is a direct development of my work as a member of the Monetary Policy Board. In this regard, I am very grateful to Lee Juyeol and Kim Choongsoo, governors of the Bank of Korea, with whom I had the great pleasure to work. I am also grateful to Jeong Heon Lee, Sunwoo Nam, and Yoonju Shin, who assisted me in accomplishing my work at the Bank of Korea successfully. Their support was essential for me to widen and deepen my knowledge of every task of the Korean central bank, and served as a catalyst for this book. For any and all mistakes and errors in this volume, I assume full responsibility. In closing, I would like to express my special thanks to Hongkee Kim, professor at Hannam University, Yeongseop Rhee, professor at Seoul National University, and Barry Eichengreen, professor at University of California – Berkeley, without whose encouragement I would never



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## **Abbreviations**

ACCL aggregate credit ceiling loan

ASEAN+3 Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's

Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam

(ASEAN) + the People's Republic of China, Japan, and

South Korea

B2B business to business B2C business to consumer

BAI Board of Audit and Inspection

BILSF Bank Intermediated Lending Support Facility

BIS Bank of International Settlements

BoE Bank of England
BoJ Bank of Japan
BoK Bank of Korea
bp basis points
B/S balance sheet

CAMEL-R Capital adequacy, Asset quality, Management, Earnings,

Liquidity and Risk-management

CAMELS Capital adequacy, Asset quality, Management, Earnings,

Liquidity and Sensitivity to market risks

CBBLF Corporate Bond-Backed Lending Facility

CBDC central bank digital currency CCyB counter-cyclical capital buffer

CD certificate of deposit

CESP Comprehensive Economic Stabilisation Programme

CET common equity tier
CIP covered interest parity

CLS continuous linked settlement system

CMA cash management accounts

CMIM Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation

CNY Chinese Yuan

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xxii List of Abbreviations

COFIX cost of funds index

DSGE dynamic stochastic general equilibrium
D-SIB domestic systemically important banks

D-SIFI domestic systemically important financial institutions

DSR debt service ratio
DTI debt to income

ECB European Central Bank
ECOS economic statistics system
ELA emergency liquidity assistance
EMS European Monetary System
EONIA Euro Overnight Index Average
EPB Economic Planning Board
ETF exchange-traded funds

EUR Euro

FCL flexible credit line Fed Federal Reserve

FEEF Foreign Exchange Equalisation Fund

Fintech financial technology

FLS funding for lending scheme
FOMC Federal Open Market Committee
FRED Federal Reserve Economic Data

FRS Federal Reserve System

FSC Financial Services Commission

FSCMA Financial Investment Services and Capital Markets Act

FSOC Financial Services Oversight Committee

FSR Financial Stability Report FSS Financial Supervisory Services

FTA free trade agreement FX foreign exchange

G7 Group of Seven: the seven major advanced economies –

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, plus the

European Union

G20 Group of Twenty - comprising Argentina, Australia,

Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom,

and the United States, plus the European Union

GATT General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade



List of Abbreviations

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GDP gross domestic product
GHQ General Headquarters
HCI heavy-chemical industry
IMF International Monetary Fund
IPI Industrial Production Index
JGBs Japanese Government Bonds

JPY Japanese Yen

KAMCO Korea Asset Management Corporation KDIC Korea Deposit Insurance Corporation

KFTC Korea Financial Telecommunications and Clearings

Institute

KORIBOR Korea Inter-Bank Offered Rate KRW Korean Won (South Korea) KTB Korean Treasury Bonds LCR liquidity coverage ratio

LIBOR London Inter-Bank Offered Rate

LOLR lender of last resort

LTRO longer-term refinancing operations

LTV loan to value

MBS mortgage-backed securities

MCT M2 + Certificates of Deposit + Money-in-Trusts

MERS Middle East respiratory syndrome

MFN most favoured nation

MMDA money market deposit accounts

MMF money market fund

MOEF Ministry of Economy and Finance

MOF Ministry of Finance

MoFE Ministry of Finance and Economy

MPB Monetary Policy Board
MPC Monetary Policy Committee
MRO main refinancing operation
MSA monetary stabilisation account
MSB monetary stabilisation bond
MSL macro-prudential stability levy
NDF non-deliverable forward

NDF non-deliverable forward NPL non-performing loan NSFR net stable funding ratio

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development



xxiv List of Abbreviations

OMO open market operation

OMT outright monetary transactions

P-CBOs primary collateralised bond obligations PCE personal consumption expenditure

PF ABCP project financing asset-backed commercial paper

PLL precautionary and liquidity line

QE quantitative easing

QQE quantitative and qualitative easing

R&D research and development RP re-purchase agreements

SAMP Systemic Risk Assessment Model for Macro-prudential

Policy

SME small- and medium-sized enterprise

SNA system of national accounts SNS social networking services SPV special purpose vehicle

TARP Troubled Asset Relief Program

TLTRO targeted longer-term refining operation

WTO World Trade Organization