

BYUNG KHWAN KIM / GI-WOOK SHIN / DAVID STRAUB (eds), *Beyond North Korea: Future Challenges to South Korea's Security*. Stanford, CA: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2011. 281 pages, US\$28.95. ISBN 978-1-931-368-19-3

Although somewhat dated, this volume is an exceptionally well-researched and – given that it was written five years ago – surprisingly relevant contribution to the analysis of South Korea's security situation. Part One of the book consists of a single chapter, a comprehensive overview of South Korea's security challenges, by Donald W. Keyser, a former US career diplomat. Its leitmotif could hardly be more topical: it is the illusive search for a resilient Northeast Asian security architecture in "a region in sweeping change, transitioning to the unknown" (p. 29). To be sure: presidential power in Seoul has changed hands since that overview was written, and Kim Jong-un has succeeded his father in Pyongyang, i.e. power in North Korea's peculiar communist dynasty has passed to the third generation. Nevertheless, many of the elements considered by Keyser in the quest for a Northeast Asian security architecture are unchanged (such as the rise of China, the uncertainties surrounding North Korea's domestic politics and its nuclear programme, the question marks over America's future role in the region and Japan's efforts to become a "normal" country).

Part Two discusses the "North Korean challenge to the security of South Korea". Its first chapter was penned by one of the editors, Byung Kwan Kim. Kim has a military background and served as Deputy Commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command. He offers a fascinating scenario-based assessment of the military security challenges facing South Korea that stem from the North's unstable economic and political situation. Again, on some of the details of Kim's analysis (e.g. those concerning the military balance in the region), developments have moved on, but the overall picture today is remarkably similar to that five years ago; Kim's analysis therefore remains pertinent. The second chapter of this part of the collection dealing with North Korea is by Jongseok Lee, a senior fellow at the Sejong Institute and a former Minister of Unification under President Roh Moo-hyun. It is somewhat less persuasive, largely because of one crucial (and to this reader dubious) assumption he makes: "There is still clearly a high probability that North Korea can be induced to abandon nuclear weapons" (p. 120). Many others would be less optimistic. Still, the chapter is valuable for its systematic and sophisticated articulation of the "progressive" view on how to deal with North Korea's nuclear capabilities.

Part Three deals with South Korea's relations with its neighbours China, Japan and Russia. The three chapters are all contributed by prominent scholars and experts: Chung Jae Ho (China), Benjamin Self (Japan) and Alexandre Mansourov (Russia). Of those, readers might find Chung's contribution the most interesting. Not only does he document the Korean-Chinese "honeymoon that was only too brief" (p. 138) and the rise of concern in Korea about China as a potential source of insecurity for South Korea. He also shows, through careful

process-tracing based on extensive interviews, how the government of President Lee Myung-bak, carefully nudged and enticed by Beijing, stumbled into a “Strategic Cooperative Partnership” with China, which his government had not really thought through and might not have wanted if it had.

Part Four covers, again in three chapters, the security threats posed by economic, energy and demographic developments. Kyung-Tae Lee surveys the challenges facing South Korea’s economic competitiveness; Ji-Chul Ryu discusses South Korea’s heavy dependence on imports of oil and natural gas; and Seongho Sheen explains the implications of South Korea’s rapidly ageing and declining population. The latter is one of the particularly strong chapters in this collection. It spells out succinctly the breath-taking speed of South Korea’s demographic transition from an aging to a super-aged society – that is, from a society in which seven per cent of the population are 65 years or older to one in which 20 per cent or more are – within the extremely short time span of 26 years. This is considerably faster than Japan, where this transition took 32 years, and much more rapid than in Germany, where the same processes of aging took 77 years. Germany, of course, has been a super-aged society since 2009, whereas the South Korean population over 65 will reach the 20 per cent threshold only in 2026. But for South Korea, the speed of the demographic transition will make the adjustment much more wrenching, and it will undoubtedly have far-reaching repercussions, some of which are explored here: on economic growth, on the strength of the armed forces and on government expenditure.

In Part Five, the conclusion, Thomas Fingar looks at the prospects of the alliance between the United States and South Korea against the background of the Global Trends 2025 scenarios developed in 2008 by the US National Intelligence Council. His conclusion – that, given the likely far-reaching changes in the global context, “old approaches to updating and reinvigorating the alliance will almost certainly be inadequate” (p. 260) – still holds true, even in the light of the National Intelligence Council’s subsequent set of scenarios in its Global Trends 2030 analysis. Overall, this excellent collection of articles offers much useful material and quite a few ideas and insights that are still relevant today.

Hanns W. Maull