

The background of the cover is a complex architectural line drawing in white on a dark blue background. It features various geometric shapes, including rectangles, circles, and arcs, some of which are filled with patterns like hexagons or dots. The drawing appears to be a technical or structural plan of a building or infrastructure.

Routledge Studies on Think Asia

THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND INDO-PACIFIC POWER POLITICS

STATUS SECURITY AT STAKE

Edited by
Jagannath P. Panda

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This is a smart and timely contribution on a key dimension of Asia's geopolitics. Dr. Panda, one of India's foremost scholars of East Asia, has assembled an excellent group of analysts to probe the place of the Korean Peninsula in a dynamic and fast-changing region. This volume will make for essential reading for anyone interested in contemporary Asia, and in international relations on the whole.

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Brings India back in, on Asia-wide issues where its perspective is very much needed. The editor assembles a fine group of scholars from throughout the continent and beyond. Creative, original theme and high-quality papers.

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The Korean Peninsula have overlooked the space for many potential regional actors for long. However, the changing power dynamics post the DPRK-US bilateral summits has allowed many regional actors to step in and aim to play different roles in the region. This book fills a very interesting research gap, particularly as the Indo-Pacific region has not been addressed as a third-party actor in the Korean Peninsula sufficiently. Therefore, this book makes a very relevant contribution to a dynamic and potentially unstable region of the world.

Niklas Swanstrom, Director, Institute for Security and Development Policy, Sweden

This is a magnificently comprehensive volume on a topic of vital importance. The diverse chapters are accessible to general readers but will also provide unique insights to experts. Highly recommended.

Richard Weitz, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Political-Military Analysis, Hudson Institute, Washington DC

This volume provides keen insight into the Korean Peninsula's role in shaping Northeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific's emerging dynamics. Through linking peninsula security and diplomatic dynamics to broader geopolitical trends in the Indo-Pacific, the contributors to this volume have demonstrated that the Korean Peninsula is an important stakeholder in contributing to stability, security, and a rules-based order in the region.

Stephen R. Nagy, Senior Associate Professor, International Christian University, Japan, & Distinguished Fellow, Asia-Pacific Foundation, Canada

In his edited volume *The Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific Power Politics: Status Security at Stake*, Dr. Jagannath P. Panda has compiled chapters of immediate relevance that are at the same time remarkably diverse in both the geographic spread of focus and authors. The Republic of Korea may remain sceptical about the Indo-Pacific as a construct, however, it is clear from this work that the Indo-Pacific as a region is deeply interested in and important to Korea.

Gordon Flake, CEO, Perth USAsia Centre, The University of Western Australia, Perth

The Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific Power Politics

This book assesses the strategic linkages that the Korean Peninsula shares with the Indo-Pacific and provides a succinct picture of issues which will shape the trajectory of the Korean Peninsula in the future.

This book analyses how critical actors such as the United States, China, Russia and Japan are caught in a tightly balanced power struggle affecting the Korean Peninsula. It shows how these countries are exerting control over the Korean Peninsula while also holding on to their status as critical actors in the broader Indo-Pacific. The prospects of peace, stability and unity in the Korean Peninsula and the impact of this on Indo-Pacific power politics are explored as well as the contending and competing interests in the region. Chapters present country-specific positions and approaches as case studies and review the impact of power politics on stakeholders' relationships in the Indo-Pacific. The book also argues that the Korean Peninsula and the issue of denuclearization is of primary importance to any direction an Indo-Pacific Partnership may take.

Bringing together scholars, journalists and ex-diplomats, this book will be of interest to academics working in the field of international relations, foreign policy, security studies and Asian studies as well as audiences interested in policy and defence in Northeast Asia and Indo-Pacific dynamics.

Jagannath P. Panda is a Research Fellow and Centre Coordinator for East Asia at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India. An expert on China, Indo-Pacific and East Asian affairs, he is the series editor for *Routledge Studies on Think Asia*.

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Status Security at Stake

**Edited by
Jagannath P. Panda**

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Abbreviations

A2AD	Anti-Access and Area-Denial
ACCC	ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting
AEP	Act East Policy
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AN/TPY-2	Army/Navy Transportable Radar Surveillance
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCP	Business Continuity Planning
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BUILD	Act Better Utilisation of Investment Leading to Development Act of 2018
CBMs	Confidence Building Measures
CDB	China Development Bank
CEP	Cultural Exchange Programme
CEPA	Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CKFTA	China-South Korea Free Trade Agreement
CMF	Combined Maritime Forces
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership
CVID	Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible, Denuclearisation (sometimes, Dismantlement)
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DoD	Department of Defence
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DTT	Defence Trilateral Talks
EANET	Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia

EARC	East Asian Railway Community
EAS	East Asia Summit
ECNEA	Intergovernmental Collaborative Mechanism on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia
EDD	Extended Deterrence Dialogue
EDGE	Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy
EDPC	Extended Deterrence Policy Committee
ESPO	East Siberian Oil Pipeline project
EU	European Union
EWG	Energy Working Group (of APEC)
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FE	Foal Eagle
FFVD	Final, Fully Verified Denuclearization
FMCT	Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty
FOIP	Free and Open Indo-Pacific
FOIPS	Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLF	Great Leap Forward
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
GRIPS	National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies
GSOMIA	General Security of Military Information Agreement
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAS	Institute for Corean [<i>sic</i>] American Studies
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
ICCSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMSS	India's Maritime Security Strategy
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
ITAN	Infrastructure Transactional Assistance Network
JADIZ	Japan's Air Defence Identification Zone
JASDF	Japan Air Self-Defence Force
JASSM	Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile
JGSDF	Japan Ground Self-Defence Force
JMSDF	Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force
JSDF	Japan Self-Defence Forces
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation
KGB	USSR Committee for State Security
KIC	Kaesong Industrial Complex
KOEC	Korea Oil Exploration Corporation
KPA	Korean People's Army
KR	Key Resolve
kt	Kilotons
LWR	Light Water Reactor

MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NAM	Non-Alignment Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NEAC	Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation
NEASPEC	North-East Asian Sub-regional Programme for Environmental Cooperation
NEAT	Northwest Pacific Action Plan Eutrophication Assessment Tool
NEO	Non-combatant Evacuation Operation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOC	National Oil Company
NOWPAP	Northwest Pacific Action Plan
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (or Non-Proliferation Treaty)
NSC	National Security Council
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
NSP	New Southern Policy
NSS	National Security Strategy
NWFZ	Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OPCON	Operational Control
OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation
PAC-3	Patriot Advanced Capability
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
POW/MIA	Prisoner of War/Missing in Action
PMD	Possible Military Dimension
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
PVA	People's Volunteers Army
Quad	Quadrilateral grouping of Australia, India, Japan, and the US
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RBIO	Rules-Based International Order
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ReCAAP	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKMC	Republic of Korea Marine Corps
RSEZ	Rason Special Economic Zone

SAR	Special Administrative Region
SDF	Self Defence Forces
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SLOCs	Sea Lines of Communication
SM-3	Standard Missile-3
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
SSBN	Strategic Submarine Ballistic Nuclear
STOVL	Short Take-Off and Vertical-Landing
TAES	Trans-Asia Energy System
TCS	Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat
TEMM	Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defence
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UFG	Ulchi-Freedom Guardian
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFK	United States Forces Korea
USIDFC	United States International Development Finance Corporation
USINDOPACOM	United States Indo-Pacific Command
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USPACOM	United State Pacific Command
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WPK	Workers' Party of Korea

Preface

The history of Korean Peninsula was always dominated by numerous invasions by empires. Following the end of Japanese imperial rule over Korea, the Peninsula underwent a partition, dividing the region into two administrative zones along the 38th parallel line. Over the next three years (1945–1948), the Soviet Union set up its communist regime in the northern part, and the United States set up in the southern part of the Peninsula.

Ironically, one of the countries on the Peninsula today poses serious and imminent perils to its surroundings and beyond, while the other advocates peace and stability. North Korea is seen as a threat to international peace and security because of its active nuclear weapons programme, track record of weapons proliferation, and an aggressive ruling regime. South Korea, on the other hand, is trying to play a greater role in regional peace and diplomacy through its economic and technical prowess. The scenario has been further complicated by their alliances with opposing powers during Cold War (the Soviet Union/China and the United States, respectively) as well as post-Cold War (China and the United States, respectively).

In recent years, the region has become the hub of great power rivalry between the United States, China, Russia, and to an extent Japan. Furthermore, since the Peninsula is situated adjacent to the Korea Strait – an important maritime trade passage – it has also become a crucial part of the region of Indo-Pacific. Thus, the Korean Peninsula remains a critical arena for the power politics in Indo-Pacific. Most importantly, no debate is likely to continue to dominate Asia's strategic spectrum as much as the issue of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and the prospect of reunification of the two Koreas. The issues are further convoluted by the distinct, and often divergent, perspectives of the critical stakeholders, namely South Korea, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia, on denuclearisation and the potential for Korean reunification.

In this regard, the historic meeting of June 12, 2018, between the American president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and the inter-Korean summits in 2018 have heightened the prospects of peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. Notwithstanding these positive trends, a denuclearised Peninsula still remains far-fetched, owing to the contentious power plays in the region. Further, despite the improved relations between Trump and Kim,

the United States and North Korea continue to disagree on the process and definition of “complete” denuclearisation. While the United States, with a non-incremental approach, persists in treating the issue of denuclearisation through maximum pressure and diplomatic force, North Korea is adamant on a more flexible US approach while intending to denuclearise “when the time is right”. At the same time, resolving historical misunderstandings between the two Koreas requires patience and time. In this context, South Korea has persistently called for resolving the crisis through peace and diplomacy. China is supporting the phased manner desired by North Korea, while Japan, another important actor in North-East Asia, is supporting the US demand for “Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement” (CVID).

Similarly, the inter-Korean summits held in 2018 enhanced the prospects of peaceful reunification of the two Koreas. Both the Koreas have repeatedly professed their commitment towards national unification, and over the last 70 years, countless words have been written and spoken about this commitment. However, the aim to achieve the reunification of the Korean Peninsula remains distant. Moreover, over the years, the political and ideological cleavages between the two Koreas have widened. Nonetheless, the role of the critical stakeholders in the reunification process should not be disregarded.

South Korea has vowed to work towards the reunification of the two Koreas by 2045. North Korea has welcomed such a pledge, but it hopes that the reunification happens without the interference of any external forces. As for the other stakeholders, Russia has been officially supporting peaceful, secure, and stable reunification. Japan, too, officially supports peaceful reunification, and though it may not be able to play a proactive role in the peace process, its long-term ambition to play a role in economic aid assistance after the reunification should not be discounted. China, on the other hand, while supporting Korean reunification, pursues an uncertain approach. It has essentially been supporting a “two Korea policy”, acknowledging that the political, economic, and security threats of reunification would be far greater. No matter what each of these actors’ official pronouncement on reunification appears to be, none of them would like to put their national interests at stake by losing the stamp of being a critical actor in the region. Hence, the genuine template of each of their stances on the reunification of the Koreas is subject to debate.

Nevertheless, a scenario is fast emerging in which world leaders are engaging with Pyongyang in contrast to the earlier stance, where the major powers sought to isolate North Korea and hoped for the collapse of its regime. This has been demonstrated by Kim Jong-un’s regular meetings with the Chinese president Xi Jinping, South Korean president Moon Jae-in, and US president Donald Trump. Russian president Vladimir Putin’s meeting with Kim Jong-un in April 2019 has further strengthened this assertion. Furthermore, the Trump-Kim summits being held in third countries, Singapore and Vietnam, is an indication that the world as a whole, sensing new trading opportunities, is now more receptive to engaging with North Korea. Further, all its neighbours and several other powers appear amicable to remove the UN sanctions on North Korea if its nuclear sites

and stockpiles are completely dismantled. This finely poised dynamic makes it possible for many non-critical actors, such as India, the Association of Northeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), Australia, and Mongolia, to play a greater role in restoring peace and security while enhancing their strategic interests in the region.

Consequently, the critical issues of denuclearisation and reunification are increasingly being discussed among critical and non-critical stakeholders as well as in the bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral, and even multilateral discussion forums and mechanisms. In other words, the power rivalries in the Korean Peninsula are no more restricted to the region but have expanded into the Indo-Pacific region, where the United States is a major security provider. It is important to note that the fate of denuclearisation in the Korean Peninsula would act as a litmus test for the legitimacy of US's economic, political, and strategic influence within and beyond Asia. Further, foreign assistance has so far aided the DPRK's (this volume uses the nomenclature of DPRK and North Korea, and RoK and South Korea, interchangeably) development of nuclear and missile capabilities. North Korea has had proliferation linkages with nuclear aspirants in West and South Asia, which, if expanded, would pose serious threats to international peace and security.

Undoubtedly, the Indo-Pacific is also likely to witness a similar coalescence or clash of interests. For instance, the United States and China, through their geo-economic strategies – “Indo-Pacific Strategy” and the “Belt and Road Initiative”, respectively – are already turning the Indo-Pacific into a competing economic as well as strategic landscape. Moreover, other major actors are also engaging in the Indo-Pacific with connectivity initiatives, such as Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) by India, “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” vision by Japan, and the New Southern Policy (NSP) by South Korea. Nonetheless, it is in the interest of the littoral and non-littoral states of the Indo-Pacific to prevent miscalculations and misperceptions, especially when it comes to nuclear powers, in order to ensure a free, open, and prosperous international environment.

Surprisingly, literature on the Korean Peninsula has not addressed the complexity of the region from the perspective of the Indo-Pacific power politics. This volume, therefore, examines not only the prospect of peace, stability, and unity in the Korean Peninsula but also the contending and competing interests in the region and its impact on the Indo-Pacific. It further explores the contours and characteristics of major power politics on the Peninsula and the critical and non-critical perspectives of the various stakeholders therein in the larger context of the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, such a volume, involving international subject experts with the lead of an Indian scholar from a prominent think-tank of India, makes it a rare and one of the prelude exercise.

This work is a sincere endeavour and has endured a rigorous review process. Any remaining omissions, mistakes, or unforeseen errors are the sole responsibility of the respective authors. The editor, the institute for which the editor works, and the publisher are not responsible either.

Dr Jagannath P. Panda

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Introduction

The Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific power politics: *Status security at stake*

Jagannath P. Panda

Debate over the state of affairs in the Korean Peninsula has dictated the strategic spectrum of world affairs for some time now. Much of the debate has transcribed the strategic orientation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) emerging as a nuclear power, the authoritarian conduct of its regime and the behavioural pattern of North Korea surviving as a relevant actor or country amidst the current international sanctions and pressures. Similarly, critical actors in the region such as the United States, China, Russia, and Japan are caught in a tightly balanced power struggle to shape the trajectory of the Korean Peninsula in order to not only exert control over the Peninsula but also hold on to their status as a critical actor in the region.

Amidst the alliance politics, the two Koreas – North and South – are entangled in a complex computation to prevent the Korean Peninsula from losing its indigenous character as a “single Korea”. Hence, *reunification* of the Koreas has emerged as a dominating subject. Moreover, with North Korea at the forefront, matters pertaining to the Korean Peninsula have emerged to become as the epicentre of North-East Asia for some time. The three Ds – *denuclearisation*, *demand for reunification*, and *dialogue diplomacy* – have been central to many of the political discussions on the region in recent times, making it the most strategically significant hotspot of the world. Therefore, each of the actors in the region is cautiously manoeuvring a range of politics that are key to their status as a critical actor in the region. The following four sections explore the critical facets at stake in the region: namely ‘nuclear security standings’, ‘test for the alliance management status in the region’, ‘the identity of Korea’, and ‘regime survival and the state security of North Korea’. In other words, this volume provides a broad account of the state of affairs in Korean Peninsula by reviewing the critical powers perspectives and their status in the region.

Nuclear security standings at stake

Developments in the Korean Peninsula are indispensably linked to the Indo-Pacific power politics. The reasons are quite explicit. The Korean Peninsula has emerged as a “critical nuclear zone”. Out of all the members of the Six-Party Talks (which abruptly ended with the non-participation of North Korea in

2009),¹ four are nuclear powers at present, while two – South Korea and Japan – hold adequate capabilities to emerge as nuclear powers. It is no secret that South Korea possesses adequate nuclear energy resources and is a leading technology-exporting country at present.² Since the 1970s, Seoul has possessed nuclear capability as part of its energy strength.³ As a national strategic priority, nuclear energy has emerged as one of the important resource facets for the Republic of Korea (ROK), even though President Moon Jae-in has pledged to phase out ROK’s nuclear power gradually. Its current strength of 24 reactors enable almost one-third of the country’s electricity plants.⁴ Further, Seoul is currently engaged in building four nuclear reactors in the United Arab Emirates under a US\$20 billion contract.⁵

Japan, however, is trying to strike a balance between seeking reliable and affordable power sources and battling the psychological aspects of the nuclear debate.⁶ In recent years, the question of possessing nuclear power versus its critical consequences has dictated Japanese public consciousness and revived the debate around the three 3Es: energy security, economy, and environment.⁷ The Fukushima nuclear disaster might alarm many in Japan, and the anti-nuclear sentiment might still be prevalent in the country. However, it is unreasonable for Japan to avoid nuclear energy as a resource, since it needs to import 90 per cent of its energy requirement in order to meet its economic needs.⁸ The Japanese dependency on nuclear energy resources is aptly reflected in Shinzo Abe’s statement that “Japan cannot do without nuclear power to secure the stability of energy supply while considering what makes economic sense and the issue of climate change”.⁹

The other four nuclear actors – the United States, China, Russia, and North Korea (with its newly acquired nuclear status) – are locked in the complex computation of *denuclearisation vis-à-vis complete denuclearisation* of the Korean Peninsula. And even though South Korea and Japan are somewhat part of these negotiations, the debates over North Korea, its capabilities, and how to make Pyongyang denuclearise have mostly involved the two major actors, the United States and China. The proliferation linkages of North Korea beyond the region of the Korean Peninsula are not clandestine anymore, highlighting that *complete denuclearisation* of the Korean Peninsula is more complex than it appears to be. In fact, at this juncture, no debate dominates the strategic landscape in Asia as much as the issue of North Korean *denuclearisation*. The US-DPRK summits, the inter-Korean meetings, and the other actors’ outreach, including China’s, to North Korea in the recent past may have heightened the prospects of peace in the Korean Peninsula, but there will be plenty of tests to come as Asia’s military and strategic landscape is redrawn.¹⁰

Undoubtedly, *denuclearisation* is a complex chapter in the history of the Korean Peninsula. As Lami Kim, in one of the chapters of this volume, argues, that the external assistance from both state and non-state actors made debates about a nuclear North Korea an international affair long ago. Further, in spite of the recent overtures, the Americans and North Koreans will continue to differ on the very process and definition of “complete” *denuclearisation*. China will continue to back North Korea for a phased denuclearised process, while Japan will continue

to hold on to its stand supporting the demand of its alliance partner, the United States, for “Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement” (CVID). What is, however, important to note is that the current logjam in the negotiations is more in terms of the *denuclearisation of North Korea* vis-à-vis the *Korean Peninsula*, rather than the *complete* denuclearisation of North Korea.

Pyongyang has been quite vocal about the distinction between *denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula* and *denuclearisation of North Korea*. For the Kim Jong-un administration, *complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula* will apparently lead to *complete denuclearisation in North Korea*. The North Korean stance is strongly reiterated in their official statement:

When we talk about the Korean Peninsula, it includes the territory of our republic and also the entire region of (South Korea) where the United States has placed its invasive force, including nuclear weapons. When we talk about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, it means the removal of all sources of nuclear threat, not only from the South and North but also from areas neighbouring the Korean Peninsula.¹¹

For North Korea, the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula also means a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. In other words, the denuclearisation debate will test the stature and standing of all the major actors in the region, particularly that of the United States, China, and the two Koreas, irrespective of their competing interests, priorities, and modalities for negotiations.¹²

Further, the debate over complete denuclearisation is not entirely limited to the Korean Peninsula. North Korea’s illegitimate nuclear technological nexus with countries such as Pakistan, Syria, Libya, and Iran have been a matter of international debate and scrutiny. Moreover, India’s consistent efforts, as a non-critical actor, have enabled the international community to take cognisance of the nuclear technological nexus between North Korea and Pakistan, and thus provide the crucial link between North-East Asia and South Asia. More importantly, what makes the Korean Peninsula tactically significant to the Indo-Pacific security calculus is how the mixed nuclear and economic character of wider North-East Asia impacts world politics. Kent Calder and Min Ye in their book *The Making of Northeast Asia* rightly contend that the converging interests of the three major nuclear and economic actors in North-East Asia make the Korean Peninsula an “unstable pivot”.¹³ In other words, North-East Asia’s economic significance for the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea makes this region a pivotal point of global geostrategy and a high-status volatile zone in the Indo-Pacific.

Test for the alliance management status

The Korean Peninsula is a critical alliance frontier of the Indo-Pacific. All the alliances – Sino-DPRK, US-ROK, and US-Japan – in the Korean Peninsula have constituted the core of world politics for decades. Yet, the status of each of

these alliances has undergone severe tests and trials amidst the (re)balancing approaches that their respective relationships have taken in recent times.

Take the Sino-DPRK alliance, for instance. This alliance has faced a lot of international scrutiny ahead of North Korea's emergence as a nuclear power, especially with continuous missile and nuclear testing. The relevance of the historic 1961 "alliance treaty" between China and the DPRK, known as the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance", has been strongly debated, especially keeping in view that its validity is up for renewal in 2021. Formally, it would necessitate China to come to North Korea's aid in case of attacks, though Beijing had stated clearly in 2017 that this clause is only applicable if Pyongyang does not attack first or provokes the attack.¹⁴ Speculations further abound on whether China would still like to maintain its alliance with North Korea when Pyongyang has emerged as a nuclear power.¹⁵ It is most unlikely that China would like to abandon or make any substantial revision to the 1961 treaty in 2021. This is partly because the Chinese leaders believe that a stronger nuclear North Korea not only strengthens its alliance framework in the region but equally weakens the United States' alliances in Asia.¹⁶ After all, North Korea's emergence as a nuclear power was only possible in the past decade with the Chinese consent, assistance, and shield that was provided to counter the mounting international pressure on Pyongyang.

Moreover, Beijing has always been Pyongyang's best ally, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union. Even with North Korea emerging as a nuclear power and the United Nations (UN) imposing sanctions on it, China continued to conduct trade – of seafood, textiles, and minerals for oil from North Korea – while also routinely condemning the nuclear tests. In fact, if Chinese reports are to be believed, their trade relations were actually improving prior to the imposition of sanctions in the latter half of 2017. It had increased by 37.4 per cent in the beginning of 2017, as compared to 2016.¹⁷

Further, since the Korean War that began on June 25, 1950, China has played one of the most defining roles not only in promoting alliance politics but also in leading non-Western bloc in global affairs.¹⁸ The *Panmunjom* and *Pyongyang declarations* arising out of the inter-Korean summits in 2018 might appear to overlook the Chinese partaking in the peace process: as China's role is passingly mentioned in the Panmunjom declaration. However, it is futile to think that China, a resident power in the Korean Peninsula, and most importantly, an alliance partner of North Korea and a strong economic partner of South Korea in the region, does not have the same clouts today that it has enjoyed since the Korean War period.

Though many would argue that North Korea has become a "strategic liability" for China, Beijing would like to strengthen its ties with Pyongyang, keeping in view that the security of the Korean Peninsula is in China's interest. As a country that shares a border with North Korea, China would like to ensure that a nuclear North Korea does not cross its limit and become erratic, affecting the regional security calculus. To Beijing, North Korea's status as a nuclear power serves the Chinese calculus to check American pressure tactics. Hence, China

would like to renew the China-North Korea Treaty of Friendship in 2021. Articles II and VI of the Treaty guarantee China's role as a protector of North Korea; the Treaty emphasises China's role as a key "strategic ally" and, importantly, as a peacemaker in the Peninsula. However, President Xi is also wary of the changing geopolitical scenarios and the importance of military balancing, especially with the United States. Therefore, military-to-military action that was discussed in the four US-China bilateral dialogues at Mar-a-Lago in 2017 was by and large restricted to North Korea. While talks related to trade and economics took much precedence, the urgency of denuclearising North Korea was also highlighted.¹⁹ From the North Korean point of view, it appears that Pyongyang would not perhaps move ahead to forge any significant understanding with South Korea or with the United States by breaking away from this historic accord that it still enjoys with China.

Likewise, the US-South Korea and US-Japan partnerships, characterised often as the security alliances in North-East Asia, have faced significant challenges. These two alliances have gone through anxious moments amidst Donald Trump's bold and unpredictable approach towards both the alliance partners. The United States' withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trump administration's demand for a cost-sharing deal with Japan and South Korea for stationing military troops in their respective territories had put in doubt the United States' military commitments in the Indo-Pacific.

In fact, despite a long-standing alliance, cracks had started to appear in the US-South Korea ties on the broad aspects of how to deal with a nuclear North Korea when both Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump were new to power in their respective countries. Also, managing China's role and interest in the Korean Peninsula seems to have emerged as big challenge in their alliance. Seoul, under Moon Jae-in, has been careful in its China policy. In fact, unlike his predecessor, Moon has always appeared to pursue a more balanced approach towards both China and the United States. Importantly, Moon has been quite consistent with his approach towards China. Although he did not reverse the decision on the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-missile system, Moon has been quite categorical about improving relations with China and has acknowledged Beijing's importance as resident power in North-East Asia. However, Moon's approach to China was not really seen that positively by the Trump administration.

Further, Trump's business or corporate-oriented sharing of the security mandate cost in the region has been a new challenge to this alliance. For example, South Korea has shouldered nearly 90 per cent of the US\$10.8 billion cost of building the new Pyeongtaek military base, which is being built after formally ending the 73-year-old historical Yongsan Garrison base in Seoul. Even though the Pyeongtaek military base is often seen as a security insurance for the US-RoK alliance, the disagreement over its cost sharing to troops stationing, including the geographical location of the base, seems to be the differing points.²⁰ This development has been a part of the American Global Defence Posture Review, which is essentially a military realignment programme to offer greater flexibility

to the posturing and operations of the United States Forces Korea (USFK). Though this decision to shift the military base was made in 2003, it confirms Donald Trump administration's selective and business-oriented military strategy towards its alliance partner.

Additionally, the United States and South Korea also signed a one-year "Special Measures Agreement" in February 2019, slated till December 2019, which would divide the cost of keeping the US troops there. The agreement further raised South Korea's expenses by 8 per cent to \$924 million.²¹ There are differences between the two countries on policies regarding concessions on North Korea and the need to launch preventive strikes. Relations between the two Koreas have deteriorated recently owing to the US-ROK military activities, and South Korea fears that launching preventive strikes can spark off a North Korean retaliation. Further, though much of the US-ROK alliance is hinged on the existential threat posed by North Korea in the region, balancing China is also crucial for the United States. South Korea, however, is impassive about holding an anti-China rhetoric. Such differences combined with Trump's repeated pressure for greater contributions have raised apprehensions in South Korea.²²

Nonetheless, the present US administration's military approach appears to be more positive towards South Korea than Japan. With Trump coming to power in the United States, there have been doubts over the United States' commitment towards Japan's security. Japan's intention, under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, to revisit the pacifist Constitution, including Article 9, and strengthening of its self-defence capabilities are additional factors that have contributed to these doubts. Tokyo wants to become more independent in military posturing, even though it obviously will continue to rely on the United States. A new uneasiness was noticeable in the US-Japan alliance.

It is important to note that US military assistance to South Korea is to protect US interests in North-East Asia, while to Japan it is intended more towards protecting US interests in the Indo-Pacific region. US troops on the Korean Peninsula roughly number around 28,500. This might decline or increase depending upon the understanding that the US administration has with the ROK. The US military will also like to consider this with its rotational policy. In Japan, around 40,000 troops were stationed as of the end of 2017. The Seventh Fleet of the United States is headquartered in Japan and is the largest sea force with approximately 20,000 sailors, 145 aircraft, and about 60–70 ships and submarines.²³ These large numbers have forced the Trump administration to rethink the cost-sharing mechanisms with Japan, creating distrust between the two alliance partners.

The most pressing concern for the United States now is the denuclearisation of North Korea, for which maintaining the regional stability in North-East Asia is of vital importance. With relations between Japan and South Korea becoming bitter on historical to economic issues, primarily after South Korea deciding to scrap the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) – an intelligence-sharing pact about North Korean missiles it has with Japan – the onus falls somewhat on the US military to facilitate this process.²⁴ Therefore,

the United States has been emphasising on holding bilateral training activities and trilateral security trainings to strengthen the resilience of their trilateral alliance.²⁵ Japan and South Korea have been identified as crucial alliance partners by the United States in the Indo-Pacific, not just to deter North Korea but also to keep China and Russia in check. What these countries require now is to de-escalate tension, put forward pragmatic approaches to facilitate denuclearisation negotiations, and come up with a sustainable strategy to strengthen the alliance.

The identity of Korea is at stake

Although both of the Koreas emphasize the significance of a unified Korea, the reality trumps the aspirations by juxtapositioning two contradicting visions for a common home. More ironically, the idea of Korean unification is focussed not on the two Koreas alone but on the major stakeholders, such as the United States, China, Japan, and Russia, whose divergent perceptions towards unification has transformed the region into a hub of power politics. It is in this regard that peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula seems rather infeasible at the moment and a unified Korea so far has been an abstract idea only. While the two sides have committed to “reconnecting the blood relations of the nation and bring forward the future of co-prosperity and independent reunification led by Korean”, the quest for unification remains marred with uncertainties and challenges.²⁶ Thus, while the need for unification is recognised, there is yet no consensus on the exact process to achieve it.

One of the most important causes of the unification impasse has been the two totally different perceptions of a unified Korea by Seoul and Pyongyang. While both the Koreas aspire for a unified Korea, it is unlikely that either of them would give up their respective national interests for the cause.²⁷ While the South is a thriving, democratic market-based economy, the North is impoverished and ruled by a bellicose communist or an authoritarian regime. However, under the circumstances of a peaceful unification of the two Koreas, where the term “unification” defines the integration of the economy, governance, as well as defence, both the Koreas would require striking a compromise by pursuing a two-way approach. In this regard, unification through this approach still seemed possible just after the “Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula” in September last year, in which both the Koreas agreed to cooperate through dialogue and diplomacy.²⁸ However, in the purview of current developments, unification seems far-fetched as the possibility for South and North Korea to make adjustments to their democratic and *juche*²⁹ ideologies respectively seems diminishing. Therefore, a peaceful unification in the Korean Peninsula has not been successful so far; instead, the differences between the two Koreas have made the situation further irreconcilable.

Consequently, while peaceful unification through compromise seems unviable, unification might be considered through conflict.³⁰ In such a scenario, South Korea might triumph in a battle with the military assistance of the United States

and take control over the Northern side, or North Korea might come out to be victorious through its growing nuclear might and possible intervention by China. However, such a scenario might lead to an occurrence of yet another Korean war, with significantly more destruction on both the sides due to the possible use of nuclear weapons, thus, defeating the purpose of unification.

A third scenario, which is often debated to be the most workable approach to achieve unification, remains the collapse of North Korean regime.³¹ Kim Jong-Un's vigour to continue enhancing its nuclear powers irrespective of the UN Security Council (UNSC) economic sanctions has been leading the fate of North Korea towards more sanctions, and hence a blow is expected to an already impoverished economy.³² Further, Kim's undemocratic executions of not just the commoners but also many high-rank officials and elites have resulted in the waning of Kim's regime popularity.³³ In this regard, a regime collapse might expedite the unification negotiation process and result in a South Korea-led governance in the region. However, while some experts argue that North Korean regime's collapse can lead the way, it is likely to upset most North Korean elites as it would not be sustainable in the long run.³⁴ Moreover, while the United States might readily support a South Korea-led government in Korea, China, the strongest ally for North Korea, might intervene and even condemn such a move or act.

Moreover, while the negotiation for unification of the two Koreas is still caught in stalemate, the South and the North Koreas are not the only players. It is imperative to understand that unification of the two Koreas cannot be achieved in vacuum and the participation of the stakeholders has become equally significant. In this case, the United States would prefer a South Korean democratic model of governance in the Korean Peninsula, which would not just enhance its market outreach and strategic footprint in the region but also transform the Peninsula as a buffer zone to balance China.³⁵ China, on the other hand, though it officially supports the Korean unification, approaches the issue through uncertainty. China essentially supports a "Two Korea" policy, acknowledging that a unified Korea might have far more political, economic, and strategic threats.³⁶ Most importantly, a unified Korea might have the potentials to undermine China's influence in the region and prevent the latter from realizing its "Chinese Dream". In similar context, the positions of Japan and Russia too deserve scrutiny as none of the stakeholders would be willing to forgo their respective vested interests to ensure the Korean Unification.

Thus, divergent perceptions and major power plays in the region have exacerbated the already convoluted unification scenario in the Korean Peninsula. What is, however, being compromised within this whole scheme of negotiation is the indigenous character of "Korea" – the identity of Korea is compromised amidst major power politics and their vested interests. Korean reunification will have repercussions far beyond its geographical vicinity, but more so for its immediate and more powerful neighbours – China and Japan. In view of the European Union (EU) experience, building trust and a credible institutional arrangement would be more successful than forceful reunification.

Regime survival to state security at stake

For North Korea, regime survival has been one of the more pressing matters in recent times, compared to denuclearisation and alliance management in the Korean Peninsula. Much has been written on the future of the Kim Jong-un regime. The international perception of the North Korean regime has persistently become stronger – a “hermit kingdom”³⁷ or a “rogue state”³⁸ that generally prefers possessing nuclear weapons to feeding its population. Even in the face of global condemnation, North Korea has not seemed to comply and is, in fact, engaging in more provocative behaviour. Such behaviour by Pyongyang has led to multidimensional challenges in the region, from the deadlock on denuclearisation to the destabilisation of the region. In such a complex context, a systematic deconstruction of North Korean state’s behaviour or its regime’s bellicose attitude, from its military-first strategy to the self-reliance ideology to parallel development of military and economic growth strategy, has become a strategic necessity.

Besides, the international standpoint of achieving peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula begins with the denuclearisation of North Korea, to which Kim Jong-un has defiantly retorted that the world must discuss the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula as a whole. For North Korea, having a nuclear umbrella is what is going to ensure regime survival, mainly with a hostile United States at its tail.³⁹ Kim Jong-un can be said to be pursuing the grand strategy of military and economic development concurrently.⁴⁰ He has repeatedly focussed on how the Middle East has become a “victim of aggression” due to the absence of “powerful self-defence capabilities”.⁴¹ In Kim’s contestation, therefore, in order to understand and facilitate discussions on denuclearisation, his regime’s actions should not be considered irrational and erratic. Rather, in Kim’s perception, his country should be treated as a rational actor, seeking to leverage diplomacy through Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capabilities.

As mentioned earlier, North Korea essentially identifies the Korean Peninsula with not just the two Koreas but also the surrounding areas where the external actors have substantial physical presence. It implies that North Korea’s decision to denuclearise depends on the withdrawal of the United States’ extended military services from the region, which are a part of the US nuclear umbrella that covers its regional allies.⁴² Such a stance has not gone down well with the US administration. There is a long-standing mistrust between the United States and the North Korean regime – Washington has been insisting that Pyongyang relinquish all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) following a maximum-pressure strategy or engagement; on the other hand, Pyongyang has been striving to obtain security assurances while insisting on giving up its weapons in a gradual manner.⁴³

While both Washington and Pyongyang seek continued negotiations, their deliberations have not shown enough flexibility, which is reflective of their inability to arrive at a common diplomatic understanding. There is also much certitude regarding the connotations of the “security guarantees” that Kim is

demanding.⁴⁴ For the United States, North Korea's continued military provocations and repeated violations of the UNSC resolutions have made it into a capricious state which cannot be trusted with security guarantees until it is completely denuclearised. For North Korea, on the other hand, US policies are not very credible – it has already withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Iran nuclear deal, the TPP, and the Paris Climate Agreement. So, North Korea is aware that denuclearising without attaining certain tangible security guarantees might allow the regime to collapse or the state of North Korea to fall at the mercy of other major powers.

The *dialogue diplomacy* in the region, mainly the Trump-Kim summits and the inter-Korean summits, so far has been more of a spectacle rather than carrying much substance, though it certainly demonstrates progress towards rapprochement. In the absence of a credible multilateral security institution that could address the security impediments in the Korean Peninsula, it is difficult to have any real negotiations. Advancing any scope of cooperation will surely involve navigating between the growing interdependencies between countries, which has been by far quite asymmetrical. North Korea holds much less economic weight than any of the other negotiating partners but holds somewhat more sway in international nuclear talks. Moreover, all of these negotiating partners have vested interests in dealing with North Korea. Therefore, conflict resolution in North Korea should involve surpassing these individual differences; fostering mutual interests; and, most importantly, being willing to compromise.

What is important to note is that actors in the region are yet to find common ground on the North Korean impasse. This could be because the dynamics North Korea shares with its negotiating partners is hinged on various historical and domestic constraints. The economic and geopolitical influence of China on the Korean Peninsula is already very high. All the while, China's top priority has been to prevent the region from destabilising, which would invariably also have a spillover effect on China's neighbouring region.⁴⁵ As Pyongyang's military alliance partner, Beijing foresees many opportunities in advancing cooperation, though it has not been very persuasive in helping North Korea denuclearise.

Russia, too, has been advocating "security guarantees for North Korea", though it is vague about what constitutes such propositions.⁴⁶ Further, despite the call for cooperation and unification, the relationship between the two Koreas at present is in a limbo. North Korea's ICBM launches have worsened the situation. For Kim, South Korea should do away with the THAAD and other joint military exercises with the United States and engage more in coming up with a constructive road map for rapprochement.⁴⁷ For South Korea, denuclearisation is the key priority – the issue of unification comes somewhat later. While Moon Jae-in hopes for unification by 2045, there is very little enthusiasm among the general population for a united Korea.⁴⁸ Moreover, addressing the issues related to the UNSC sanctions resolutions against North Korea, its ICBM manufacturing capacity and its human rights violations take precedence for South Korea.

Just because the North Korean regime has survived for so long does not mean its survival in the coming years is ensured. Kim Jung-un, being a rational man,

understands that his policies are not sustainable in the long run – they will and already have crippled the economy. While in the past, fanatic Korean nationalism and various forms of repression brought some economic aid, treading along the same route will lead to a systemic crisis. Instead, what multilateral institutions and the international community should strive for is not just denuclearising North Korea but assisting it in the transformation of its decaying economy. If and when North Korea opens to the outside world, the global economy should be receptive enough to accommodate its economic and social change. This receptivity may, in future, help to reunify the Korean Peninsula, achieve peace and stability in the region, and lift the current atmosphere of threat facing North-East Asia.

The book at hand

This volume addresses the strategic linkages that the Korean Peninsula shares with the Indo-Pacific and provides a succinct picture of the critical issues that will shape the trajectory of the Korean Peninsula in times to come. It brings together trained scholars, journalists, and ex-diplomats with substantial policy experiences. Besides, this volume draws on primary sources of materials, particularly language sources, and field experiences, which makes it an invaluable resource for researchers, graduate students, scholars, and policy makers.

This book is divided into three sections. The first section, “Critical Perspectives”, talks about the role of critical actors in Korean Peninsula, highlighting their distinct, and often divergent, views on denuclearisation as well as national reunification. In Chapter 1, Donald Kirk argues that the US strategy on the Korean Peninsula rests on the principle of the status quo and is aimed to preserve the historic alliance between the United States and the ROK. The author explores the United States’ shifting policy on the two Koreas in the last few years and wonders if Trump, first by threatening North Korea and then by pursuing a diplomatic tack, might be getting somewhere. He observes that the lingering threat is that the United States’ patience is wearing thin as North Korea is avoiding “complete denuclearisation”, as promised in the Singapore summit, and that the absolutist CVID no longer dominates the conversation post the summit.

Anurag Viswanath, in Chapter 2, discusses the “great game” that has transformed North-East Asia into a geo-spot riven with politics and polarisation, cooperation and contestation, manoeuvres and maritime disputes, triumvirates and tensions – a mass of entangled relationships that has made it one of the most volatile regions in the world. She argues that China was, is, and shall remain a critical player in the region. However, China has to balance its old responsibilities as a socialist power and new global responsibilities as the second most important power, keeping in view its economic, political, and strategic interests. She contends that the future road map for the region seems elusive because of the divergent interests of all the stakeholders.

In Chapter 3, Kohtaro Ito argues that the confrontation between Japan and China in the Senkaku Islands after the 2000s and the continued military provocations by North Korea have increased the threat perception for Japan.

As a response, Japan has not only fostered military relations with the US and Australian forces but also strengthened formerly weak military relations with other countries, such as Britain, Canada, and France. The author contends that Japan's Korean Peninsula strategy will function as a deterrent for not only North Korea but also China. However, what Japan fears is that the reduction or withdrawal of the USFK will be decided by the United States alone or between the United States and South Korea. In Chapter 4, Georgy Bulychev and Valeriia Gorbacheva argue that Russia's relationship with North Korea has experienced quite a few highs and lows in the three post-Soviet decades, in keeping with the policy changes. The authors trace the Russia-North Korea relations from 1991 until present times, through seven phases, discussing the prospects of cooperation and the challenges therein.

The second section of the volume, "Contending Perspectives", talks about how the critical yet contradictory approaches of the important actors have resulted in a power rivalry in the Korean Peninsula. In Chapter 5, Jina Kim explains that the dialogue on denuclearisation, which started as a bilateral issue between the United States and North Korea, has now transformed into a multi-party negotiation. The chapter also asserts that achieving consensus on a denuclearisation road map is impossible because political, technological, and diplomatic issues must be considered together. Nonetheless, it argues that facilitating mutual exchange and cooperation is one of the ways to incentivise North Korea and that maintaining a sustainable peace environment when North Korea renounces its nuclear arsenals requires a holistic approach and institutionalised practices within an agreed framework.

In Chapter 6, Kuyoun Chung argues that the strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific will evolve dramatically over the course of North Korea's denuclearisation. The author also asserts that any endgame of the denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula is expected to shift the strategic interests of regional powers in the Indo-Pacific, influencing not only regional strategic stability but also the extended deterrence that has long sustained the US strategic dominance in the region. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the strategic aspects of current denuclearisation negotiations and how they will interact with the Sino-US strategic competition that will define security environment in a foreseeable future.

In Chapter 7, Lami Kim illustrates how foreign assistance has so far aided the DPRK's development of nuclear and missile capabilities, as well as its rise as a proliferator. The author then discusses, from a global non-proliferation perspective, the implications of the success and failure of ongoing denuclearisation negotiations. In Chapter 8, Archana Upadhyay discusses the fast-changing global strategic environment that requires Russia to reset ties with the two Koreas, keeping in mind the far-reaching historical trajectory. The author analyses how the "Korea factor" in Russia's foreign policy strategy is crucial for its North-East Asia outreach and overall stability.

The remaining two chapters in this section analyses two non-critical – Mongolian and Indian – perspectives. In Chapter 9, Alicia Campi argues that Mongolia's multifaceted ties to the DPRK, which stem from its present

non-threatening status and communist-era commonalities, can be useful in the Korean Peninsula peace process. She also discusses how Mongolia is uniquely placed to not only play the role of a mediator in the North-South Korean dispute, by being an active force in the North-East Asian peace process, but also create new mechanisms that contribute to regional connectivity. In Chapter 10 – the last chapter of the second section – Jagannath P. Panda and Mrityika Guha Sarkar assess India's approach to the Korean Peninsula keeping in view the current developments in the Indo-Pacific. They argue that India's dialogue and diplomacy approach is responsible for its enhanced partnership with South Korea and sustained diplomatic relations with North Korea. This very approach, they reason, is key to India being seen as a prospective facilitator or mediator to promote peace in the Korean Peninsula.

The last section of the book, "Competing and Cooperating Perspectives", discusses power politics in the Korean Peninsula, analysing the critical undercurrents that shape the competing and cooperative perspectives of the Korean Peninsula vis-à-vis Indo-Pacific. In Chapter 11, Jin Shin argues that the divergent political systems of the two Koreas will have serious implications for the global political order. The author further throws light on Kim's governing philosophy and strategies, as well as his undermined status in North Korea, and looks at the future trajectory of the country's nuclear policy and how it determines Korean unification.

In Chapter 12, Manpreet Sethi briefly traces the evolution of the various negotiating mechanisms in order to understand what has worked in the past and could be used again to make it work in the future. The chapter also provides an overview of the limited achievements of the negotiating mechanisms at different points of time. It concludes by drawing some inferences from these negotiating mechanisms in the Korean Peninsula for the situation in the Indo-Pacific. In Chapter 13, Seoujou Kang explores how the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, starting as geopolitics, is transforming itself into a geo-economics construct in the face of rising China. The author also compares the two competing economic architectures, led by the United States and China, in the Indo-Pacific region and analyses their effects on the region as a whole, and South Korea in particular.

Finally, in Chapter 14, Atmaja Gohain Baruah argues that North-East Asia is in a critical space in international politics, where resource competition and geostrategic rivalry between the neighbouring countries have stirred more conflict than cooperation. The chapter addresses three areas of growing resource insecurity: namely environmental concerns, maritime disputes, and energy security. The author contends that while resource insecurity has intensified economic and political rivalry between some of Asia's key economic powers, it has also created the conditions that encourage cooperation. However, the absence of cooperating mechanisms and political motivation is a challenge. Therefore, identifying areas for resource cooperation between these countries will not only achieve energy security and reduce regional tension but also encourage environmentally sustainable policies.

Overall, this volume addresses the critical facets of Korean Peninsula and its undercurrents that will continue to shape the future of the region. Given the

fluidity of the politics in the region, the assessment made in this volume are certainly not constant. Yet, it goes without stating that the assessments made in this volume offer critical judgements on the future directive of the region that will certainly be a referring point for readers, especially policy makers and scholars.

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