

## **Book Reviews**

Young Back Choi, Yesook Merrill, Yung Y. Yang  
and Semoon Chang, eds.

### **Perspectives on Korean Unification and Economic Integration**

Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2001

**Prepared by**  
Myung-lim Park\*

As the "Korean problem" receives increasing worldwide attention in academic circles, the current situation of North Korea is sort of an imaginary black hole for many international and domestic observers alike. In particular, the bizarre combination of economic breakdown, famine, and military-first ideology of North Korea continues to be a mind-boggling enigma both in theory and practice.

*Perspectives on Korean Unification and Economic Integration* is an offspring of scholarly efforts to answer the North Korean problem and the unification issue of the two Koreas. It deals with a broad range of topics and issues including philosophical questions as well as practical policy matters. While the book contains coverage of security concerns between the U.S. and North Korea as well as North and South Korea, it primarily focuses on the economic issue by discussing at length the effects of telecommunication and foreign investment in terms of potential scenarios and costs for North-South unification.

Some of the answers this book provides and the tentative conclusions to be drawn from them are to a certain extent useful and merits consideration: first, the most important determinant of the North Korean economy is security, not

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economics; and secondly in a related vein, even if North Korea adopts a solidly conceived opening policy coupled with strong efforts at reform, the chance of success remains slim unless outside help is substantial. The choice confronting Washington, Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing is whether or not to try to raise the possible payoff of opening to induce Pyongyang to commit itself to a bolder course—unification costs will vary depending on the pathway of unification. It also maintains that the costs of unification can be controlled through appropriate policy choices—that is, a gradual approach can reduce both the costs and financial difficulties associated with unification. However, some of the arguments in this book, such as that suggesting the superiority of a "no unification" alternative on economic as well as political grounds, promise to be controversial while the expected benefits of unification seem to be overstated.

In the end, the authors conclude that "no overnight solutions or magic bullets exist." To the scholars and practitioners of this field, this book is one of the best guideline for understanding the current situation in North Korea and searching for the possible solutions.

Anis Chowdhury and Iyanatul Islam, eds.

### **Beyond the Asian Crisis: Pathways to Sustainable Growth**

Cheltenham, U.K. and Northampton, MA, U.S.:  
Edward Elgar, 2002

**Prepared by**  
Sangmoon Hahn\*\*

This rich book attempts to bring together the current thoughts on the Asian

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