

Preface

The Japan Center for Economic Research chose Korean Peninsula issues as the theme of its Asian research in 2015, a year that marked the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea. In examining the future of the Korean Peninsula and relations between Japan and South Korea, we decided to focus on the most pressing issue: the North Korean risk.

In conducting this research, we sought the assistance of two experts with abundant experience of diplomacy and government, as well as a wealth of academic experience. They are Kang In-duk, Chair Professor at the University of North Korean Studies, who has previously served at the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) and as Minister of Unification, and Kazuo Ogura, Advisor to the Japan Foundation, who has held such key posts as Director of the Northeast Asia Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Japanese Ambassador to Korea.

With the participation of both Japanese and South Korean experts, we set up a research group chaired by these two eminent individuals and held joint Japan-South Korea seminars to undertake in-depth discussions. Under the leadership of the joint chairmen, we assembled a team of up-and-coming researchers from both countries. In addition to studying documents and other materials, members of the research team undertook a field study in North Korea, visiting such locations as Pyongyang and the provincial city of Wonsan. At the end of this process, in late 2015, we published the report entitled *Kitachōsen risuku to nikkān kyōryoku* [The North Korean Risk and Japan-South Korea Cooperation]. It provided a multifaceted analysis of the increasingly opaque risks arising from the Kim Jong-un regime from political, military, economic, and social perspectives, among others. It was also submitted to the leaders of both countries as a report without parallel anywhere in the world. Having revised and edited the report to take account of the nuclear test conducted by North Korea in January 2016, we have now published this English translation.

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