The concept of security has undergone a significant change since the 1980s. Amid growing criticism of the realist security discourse, the concept has been increasingly enlarged to include agendas beyond the military dimension of interstate relations. Definitions of security and insecurity have been broadened to encompass the greater number of possible threats of the modern era and extended to include the larger number of agents in a globalized world. And yet despite the growing trend toward a more comprehensive concept of security, the vast majority of North Korean studies have continued to focus narrowly on the nuclear and missile issues and the traditional, state-centric security relations surrounding Pyongyang. This book is an effort to shift the focus of research and attention on North Korean security from traditional security issues to the largely unexplored area of non-traditional security issues.

This volume examines various non-traditional security issues in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the international community’s efforts to promote a non-traditional, security–centered approach in dealing with North Korean security and insecurity. It brings together the work of leading North Korea experts, all of whom are long-time analysts of North Korea and experts on the issues at hand. Many of the contributors have enhanced this volume greatly with firsthand experience gained in visiting North Korea on multiple occasions. This carefully crafted collection of multinational perspectives sheds light on the most critical issues facing North Korea and threats to its non-traditional security. To my knowledge, no book-length study on North Korea’s non-traditional security has been published; hence, the book is
expected to make a significant contribution to the body of literature on
the security of North Korea.

The volume begins with an examination of the complex and multi-
faceted connections between traditional and non-traditional security
in the North Korean context, which serves to situate many of the vol-
ume’s subsequent issues in a larger theoretical framework. Within this
framework, the volume delves into some of the most pressing non-tra-
ditional security threats that North Korea faces today. Chapter 2 exam-
ines energy security, looking specifically at Pyongyang’s “energy insecu-
ritvity predicament.” It analyzes how energy problems affect Pyongyang’s
economic sectors, often in complex and indirect ways, and addresses a
number of challenges that the international community faces in design-
ing measures to improve North Korea’s energy security. Chapter 3 ex-
plicates the particular challenges facing the women of North Korea, fo-
cusing particularly on their economic and societal security. It explores
the highly gendered impacts of threats to North Korean non-traditional
security, such as forced migration, human trafficking, and sexual vio-
ence. Chapter 4 explores how transnational organized crime is securi-
tized in the context of North Korea, analyzing many of the issues sur-
rounding North Korea’s reputation as a criminal state. It seeks to sepa-
rate the facts about North Korean criminal behavior from the political
biases that so often bring this type of assertion to the fore, thus provid-
ing an accurate picture of the issues at stake. The first part of the vol-
ume concludes with two perspectives on food security in North Korea.
Chapter 5 looks at the internal dimensions of North Korean food secu-
ritvity and insecurity, covering key elements of the agricultural sector, its
relationship to industry, and the role of government policy in shaping
the behavior of cooperative farms and farmworkers. It also proposes a
scenario in which North Korea is able to achieve self-sufficiency in food
production. Chapter 6 clarifies the complex nature of the external di-
mension of North Korean food security and insecurity in the famine
and current postfamine eras. It examines the prospects for an improved
food security through inflows of food, fertilizer, and fuel from outside.

Part 2 focuses directly on the various ways of potentially promot-
ing the non-traditional security of North Korea. Chapter 7 looks at the
post–Cold War concept of the “responsibility to protect” (RtoP) and its
applicability to the North Korean context. It shows how the narrowly
defined concept of RtoP excludes a range of human-security problems facing the North Korean people. Chapter 8 analyzes North Korean refugee issues through an international legal perspective, which seeks legal and political solutions to the plight of defectors from the country. It discusses the legal measures available to refugees under international laws related to human rights, humanitarian issues, and refugee protection. Chapter 9 examines the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in enhancing the non-traditional security of the North Korean people. It evaluates NGOs’ contributions and scope of activities with special reference to the challenges that U.S. NGOs face in navigating their respective relationships with both the American and North Korean governments. The volume concludes by bringing the traditional versus non-traditional security debate back to the fore in consideration of the preceding, substantive issue-area examinations. As a whole, the book presents a significant body of work on an array of increasingly important non-traditional security threats as they apply to North Korea.

Earlier versions of many of the chapters in this volume were presented at the “International Conference on ‘Non-Traditional Security Issues in North Korea,’” co-organized by the Centre for Korean Research at the University of British Columbia, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty, Korea Office. I would like to acknowledge the financial support the Academy of Korean Studies provided for this conference. Thanks are due not only to the contributors whose work appears in this volume but also to all other conference participants for their contributions. I also express my deep gratitude to my research assistant Nick Anderson for his valuable assistance throughout the entire project, from conception to completion. I must finally thank all my colleagues who provided their constructive comments and advice, without which this volume would not have been possible.

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