

Preface

Work for this book began shortly after the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in March 2011 in Fukushima, when we asked Japanese friends and colleagues in the Tohoku region what we could do to help the victims. Many replied that they simply did not believe the information that the government, the company (Tokyo Electric Power Company, TEPCO), much of the press, or even some of the academic specialists were telling them about the implications of the disaster.

We decided to put together an international workshop, in collaboration with Tohoku Fukushi University (TFU) in Sendai, on the topic of 'Nuclear Disaster Response: The Need to Know', and we searched for the most knowledgeable people we could find, in Japan and abroad, to try to answer the questions raised. Koki Hagino, President of TFU, generously hosted the workshop, and Professor Norifumi Namatame worked with us to organise two days of meetings, and then a public presentation of some of the results, in Japanese, to some 400 people. Two of our colleagues, Richard Tanter and Rikki Kersten, made presentations in Japanese, and other workshop participants spoke via translated filmed interviews. In the end, we published a special issue of *Asian Perspective* 37(4) 2013, with papers from that meeting edited by Professor Namatame.

Yet the deeper we got into the global debate about nuclear power, the more concerned we became about the quality of the discussion. We were surprised to find the amount of misinformation and even disinformation that sometimes characterised debates about nuclear power. At best, in an organised debate, proponents and opponents typically would talk past each other, one side focusing on some aspects, and the other side emphasising different aspects. Moreover, while neither Australia nor any of the 10 member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian

Nations (ASEAN), who are our closest neighbours, had built nuclear power plants, several were very interested, and some had already made plans for nuclear power.

This prompted us to organise a second international workshop in 2014, this time at The Australian National University (ANU), on the topic 'Nuclear Power in East Asia: The Costs and Benefits'. We identified nine key aspects of any decision to build a nuclear power plant (e.g. costs of construction, regulation, liability in the event of accident, decommissioning, disposal of nuclear waste, and the relationship of nuclear power to climate change), and we looked for experts on these particular aspects, no matter whether they were publicly committed to supporting or opposing nuclear power.

Participants came from the United States, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Australia. We met for two days at the China in the World building at ANU, and then made a presentation of results for the public on the third day. We also published a second special issue of *Asian Perspective* 39(4) 2015, with papers from that workshop this time edited by Tilman Ruff.

This book presents the results of our work since Fukushima, the findings from our workshops, and the insights of additional contributions from other colleagues who have joined us in the project. It is our best effort to assess the role of nuclear power in East Asia.

Our thanks go first and foremost to the authors of the 11 chapters, and to Mary-Louise Hickey, who has so carefully copy-edited their work. Thanks also to the other scholars and students who participated in the workshops and helped out in the arrangements. Koki Hagino and Norifumi Namatame were wonderful hosts in Sendai at TFU, and at ANU we owe thanks to the Department of International Relations, the Japan Institute, the ANU–IU (Indiana University) Pan Asia Institute, and to China in the World for the use of their excellent facilities. The Global Nuclear Power Database, from *The World Nuclear Industry Status Report* and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, has provided a comprehensive empirical foundation for our study, and we are especially grateful to Julie Hazemann and Mycle Schneider, who have been so helpful for our work.

Thanks to all.

Canberra

September 2017

This text is taken from *Learning from Fukushima: Nuclear power in East Asia*, edited by Peter Van Ness and Mel Gurtov, published 2017 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.