

Foreword

Byung-Yeon KIM *

* *Seoul National University, South Korea; kimby@snu.ac.kr*

This volume of the *Journal of Comparative Economic Studies* deals with the following two issues: the relationship between the state and civil society in Russia, and international political economy in China and Russia. The first and second are the outcomes of joint research among researchers headed by Prof. Yokogawa and Prof. Kobayashi, respectively.

What is an ideal relationship between the state and civil society? This question must have various answers. Given the absolute dominance of the state over civil society during the Soviet period, however, readers are likely to agree that Russia's civil society requires strengthening to gain sufficient independence from the state. The strong power of Putin's government, which appears to repress civil society, further reinforces this claim.

The question of how to strengthen civil society in Russia's context remains. Some purposeful activities to gain further independence from the state and increase public awareness in this regard might be necessary. At the same time, one can argue that free enterprises independent of the state contribute to civil society. This is partially because they nurture the idea of freedom that started initially in the economic sector and subsequently spread to other sectors in society. It also helps to improve the quality of human capital in various ways. Investment in education is likely to increase and learning by doing contributes to human capital accumulation. Is Russia moving toward this direction? The papers included in the first issue of this volume relate both directly and indirectly to this issue.

The second issue of this volume addresses a very timely topic: the Chinese economy together with some attention to Russia's economy. The papers in the second volume provide comprehensive coverage, including the macro economy, innovation, infrastructure (The One Belt One Road initiative), competition with U.S. multinationals in the high-tech industry, and greenhouse gas emissions. Readers should gain knowledge on not only the current state of the Chinese economy, but also the outcomes of the pursuit of Chinese supremacy in technology development, which is the core of the conflict with the U.S.

The future of the Chinese economy will affect the world economy, including that of Japan. One can argue that the largest uncertainty in the world economy lies in the consequences of the competition and conflict between the U.S. and China. Will this end with one winning and the other losing? Will this process be smooth or turbulent? Is the rivalry between the U.S. and China similar to the Thucydides trap? One cannot answer to these questions with confidence. I believe, however,

that the papers in this volume can provide some answers on the extent to which the Chinese economy is prepared for such a battle by revealing its strengths and the weaknesses.