

# Troubled Encounter: Japan–DPRK Non-Relations

Bert Edström

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# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary .....  | 5  |
| Introduction .....   | 9  |
| The Historical Setting of Present-Day Japanese–DPRK Relations .....                            | 11 |
| The Cold War Period: The Onset of Japanese–DPRK Non-Relations .....                            | 13 |
| Japan’s Bifurcated Korea Policy .....  | 17 |
| The Early Post-Cold War Period: Initiation of Governmental Contacts .....                      | 20 |
| The Kanemaru Delegation .....  | 24 |
| Negotiations over Diplomatic Recognition .....   | 28 |
| Ten-Year Impasse 1992–2002.....  | 32 |
| Prime Minister Koizumi Goes to Pyongyang.....  | 43 |
| Koizumi’s Visit to Pyongyang .....   | 48 |
| The Victimization of Japan: A Turning Point in the History of Japanese–<br>DPRK Relations..... | 53 |
| Developments After the Koizumi–Kim Summit .....  | 56 |
| Japan’s Evolving Sanctions Policy .....  | 59 |
| Concluding Remarks.....  | 71 |
| Bibliography .....   | 75 |
| About the Author .....   | 87 |



## Executive Summary

This paper explores the interplay between two neighbors that have been victims of history, Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, also known as North Korea). In the case of the North Koreans, memories of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in the 16th century and the so-called *Seikanron*, or "the debate on the conquest of Korea" that raged in Japan in 1873, as well as Japan's annexation of Korea 1910–45, have left a legacy on Koreans as having been the victims of a ruthless Japanese occupation. Until recently, this image was generally accepted, even by most Japanese, and representatives of the Japanese government expressed Japan's readiness to heal the wound by contributing "economic cooperation." A volte-face in the Japanese view was seen in 2002. On the occasion of Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang on September 17, DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il admitted that Japanese citizens had been abducted by the DPRK and a majority of the victims had perished. The Japanese, who, because of the past occupation, had previously seen Japan as the perpetrator and Korea as the victim, now saw themselves as victims of crimes perpetrated by the DPRK. This about-turn, from perpetrator to victim, demonstrates an impact similar to that of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had on the Japanese psyche. The *victimization* of Japan became a turning point in the history of the relations between Japan and the DPRK.

Japan's relations with Korea have been tortured by the burden of history. Following the division of the Korean Peninsula into two separate states in 1948, it took until 1965 for the Republic of Korea (ROK, otherwise known as South Korea) and Japan to normalize their relations. Japan has yet to establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK. The first high-level encounter between Japan and the DPRK took place in 1990. In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, the Japanese government dispatched a high-level delegation to Pyongyang led by Kanemaru Shin, vice-president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and also a former deputy prime minister. The delegation members represented the LDP, the main opposition party, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), and the foreign ministry. In the statement issued after the visit, the LDP and the JSP had agreed that Japan should "officially apologize and compensate" the DPRK for "the enormous misfortunes and

misery imposed on the Korean people for 36 years and the losses inflicted on the Korean people in the ensuing 45 years.” The agreement to compensate the DPRK for the postwar period was done without consulting the governments of the United States or the Republic of Korea. Not only did Kanemaru have to apologize for this oversight but the Japanese government did not accept the agreement. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki of Japan promised the U.S. and the ROK that Japan would consult with them in the future.

Even while the breakthrough in relations with the DPRK that had been in the offing dissipated, both the Japanese and the DPRK governments stuck to the agreement to commence normalization talks. However, after eight rounds of talks, the negotiations between Japan and the DPRK ended without any agreement in November 1992. Subsequently, a ten-year impasse evolved in relations between Japan and the DPRK.

While the decade between 1992 until 2002 did not see any progress in Japan–DPRK bilateral relations, worrisome developments occurred on the Korean Peninsula. Japan’s worried about the DPRK’s noticeable military buildup, including its increasingly observable indications of acquiring nuclear and missile capabilities. The DPRK’s nuclear plans bore fruit in the sense that it made the United States and other parties sign the so-called Agreed Framework in 1994, aimed at freezing the DPRK’s on-going nuclear activities. The United States and the others promised to provide crude oil and two light-water nuclear reactors in return for the DPRK dismantling its nuclear program. Japan’s part was to make a substantial contribution towards the construction for the DPRK of two proliferation-proof light-water nuclear reactors. In order to promote good will Japan also donated 500,000 tons of rice in 1995.

DPRK upped the stakes in August 1998, when it launched a Taepodong-1 ballistic missile that traversed northern Japan’s airspace before falling into the Pacific Ocean. The Japanese government’s response was to suspend its signing of the reactor funding agreements, stop food aid and normalization talks and cancel charter flights between Japan and the DPRK. Sanctions were short-lived, at least in part. Already in October the Japanese government announced that it did not want to give the DPRK an excuse to resume nuclear weapons development by causing the collapse of the KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization), the most realistic and effective framework for preventing the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons,



and would therefore reopen cooperation in KEDO, and in November 1999, Japan lifted most of its sanctions; what remained of sanctions were lifted in December the same year.

Probably the most eye-catching event in Japan's postwar dealings with North Korea unfolded on September 17, 2002, when Koizumi Jun'ichirō became the first incumbent Japanese prime minister to visit the DPRK. A number of achievements resulted from his summit meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong Il. Kim admitted that 13 Japanese citizens had been abducted by overzealous individuals in the DPRK's security services between 1977 and 1982 and apologized for these activities. Only five of the abductees were alive (one was unaccounted for). Under the agreement they were granted passage to return to Japan. Furthermore, the DPRK's self-imposed moratorium on missile launches would be extended beyond 2003, which seemed to eliminate what Japan saw as a direct threat to its national security. The DPRK would also "abide by all relevant international agreements in order to comprehensively resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula." Koizumi committed Japan to pay compensation for the Japanese annexation of Korea 1910–45, although it was labeled "economic cooperation," as it had been termed in 1965 in the agreement reached with the Republic of Korea.

What Koizumi achieved became a prime example of the result that can ensue from a statesman's personal diplomacy. The favorable outcome was a result not least of the fact that Koizumi in his strategy to deal with Asian and African nations treated them as being on an equal footing, respecting their national pride regardless of the size and power of those nations. The results he reached were favorably received by the Japanese public. His approval rating increased markedly in polls, from 44 percent in August 2002 to 67 percent after the summit. Despite this, the summit meeting between Koizumi and Kim became a turning point in a sense not anticipated.

The exuberance felt in Japan after Koizumi's travel to Pyongyang did not last long. To the Japanese, the abductions became the human face of the North Korean threat. The crucial moment in Pyongyang when Kim told Koizumi that not only had Japanese citizens been abducted but many of them were dead, became a turning point. From the moment it became known to the Japanese public that abductions had taken place, and that some of the victims had perished, those who wanted to pursue normalization with the DPRK, like Koizumi, had an uphill battle. The popular support

for retaliation and punishment built up, spearheaded by right-wingers and support organizations of the families of the kidnapped. The young and hawkish LDP politician Abe Shinzō emerged as a resolute hardliner never tiring of denouncing the DPRK. His support grew and his one-issue, anti-DPRK agenda, significantly aided his election to prime minister in 2006. By then, Koizumi's attempt to make normalization negotiations advance had come to naught. His final notable deed related to the DPRK was to make a second visit to Pyongyang in 2004 to negotiate the return to Japan of seven children of the five abductees, who were living in the DPRK. His visit secured their return to Japan.

In June 2006, seven Taepodong missiles were fired by the DPRK. The Japanese government swiftly implemented unilateral sanctions, including the ban of DPRK nationals from entering Japan and the North Korean ferry *Mangyongbong-92* – a ferry shuttling between Wonsong in North Korea and Niigata, and as the main direct link between the two countries often said to be North Korea's life-line – from entering Japanese harbors. The situation was aggravated in October when Pyongyang tested a nuclear device. All North Korean vessels were stopped from entering Japanese ports for six months and imports of all items from the DPRK to Japan were prohibited. Japan also took part in sanctions approved of by the UN Security Council.

In 2009, the former political opposition, with the main opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan, took over after the LDP that had been in the government almost uninterrupted since 1955. The shift of ruling coalition did not result in any change of Japan's policy towards the DPRK. The abduction issue has turned out to be so ingrained in Japan's body politic that not even the fall from grace of the seemingly ever-ruling LDP resulted in any changes. Most Japanese continue to see Japan and the Japanese people as victim to actions taken by a ruthless DPRK.

## Introduction

It was an unlikely scene. The place was Pyongyang. The year 1990. Japan's most powerful politician, Kanemaru Shin, had arrived a few days before as the leader of a Japanese delegation. The delegation had been set up in an effort from the Japanese government to achieve the release of two members of the crew of a Japanese fishing boat that had been captured by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), also known as North Korea. The result of the delegation's visit was much more far-reaching than what had been anticipated in Tokyo, when the delegation was dispatched. Not only were the two crew members to be released, agreement had been reached to commence negotiations on normalizing relations.

On NHK evening news, I saw Kanemaru shake hands with Kim Il Sung, the leader of the DPRK since more than four decades. Kim was jovial. It was easy to see how clearly moved Kanemaru was. He bowed long and deep and tears could be seen in his eyes. This powerhouse in Japanese politics, Japan's most influential political fixer at the time, behaved like a schoolboy. Watching the NHK news, I was perplexed. Puzzled I asked a friend of mine, a political science professor at Keio University, where I was spending a year as a guest researcher, about Kanemaru's odd behavior. Well, he said, Kim has ruled his country for 45 years. Such a leader you have to respect.

The delegation's visit to Pyongyang took place soon after the Cold War had ended. It had been dispatched by the Japanese government in an effort to start the arduous process for normalizing relations with the DPRK, a neighbor with which Japan did not have diplomatic relations despite that more than four decades had gone since the DPRK was founded in 1948. The lack of relations had not been strange for a start. In the Cold War period, it was not unusual for neighboring countries not to have diplomatic relations if they belonged to different ideological camps. But, eventually, Japan's non-existing relations with the DPRK became an anomaly, when Japan had normalized relations with all other countries.

For many years into the postwar period, Japan had practiced a "hands off" approach vis-à-vis its Asian neighbors, careful not to poke its nose in the internal affairs of other countries, burnt as it was from the disastrous outcome of its prewar and wartime imperialism and aggression. In the case

of the DPRK, the “hands off” policy had been so pervasive that formal diplomatic relations had not been established. This situation continues even today despite that there are good reasons for Japan to strive to open relations with the DPRK even though it is a country that has been openly hostile to Japan and has often indulged in aggressive rhetoric. The non-existence of relations is sticking out as a reminder of Japan’s imperial past.

The visit of the Kanemaru delegation had been preceded by preparatory moves by both sides. The Japanese had held discussions with the Chinese. Intentions had been mapped. The DPRK’s supreme leader Kim Il Sung had spoken positively of statements made by prominent politicians of Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki had expressed Japan’s willingness to apologize for the hardships that the Koreans had to endure during Japanese annexation period (1910–45) as well as to pay compensation. For the DPRK, the reparations that Japan was willing to shoulder amounted to a colossal sum. The handshake between Kanemaru and Kim sealed an agreement that Kim would get at his disposal economic resources of a scale never before seen in the reclusive country and would certify Kanemaru the place in Japan’s historical annals that was so dear to him.

Despite the handshake, this was not to happen. Almost immediately this attempt to take the final step towards normalizing relations derailed. Still today, almost seven decades into the postwar period, Japan and the DPRK do not have diplomatic relations. This report details how the stalemate has come about and why this exceptional situation – that maybe could even be described as abnormal – continues to exist.

## The Historical Setting of Present-Day Japanese–DPRK Relations

One reason why Japan's relations with Korea have been so tortured is the burden of history. Even after Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), also known as South Korea, normalized their relations in 1965, public disgust in the ROK at what the Korean people had to endure during the annexation has flared up at occasions. Outbursts of nationalist sentiments pitted at Japan resulted in an inflammatory public mood and anti-Japanese demonstrations. The ill feelings of Koreans in the north have been harsher after decades of the regime's anti-Japanese indoctrination and propaganda.

The legacy of the past is a burden for Japan, due to the nature of the Japanese–Korean relations. The beginning of adverse relations between Korea and Japan goes back to the end of the 16th century, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi's forces invaded Korea and war raged for seven years. To prove their military success, the Japanese cut off the nose and ears of Koreans and sent them back to Japan as trophies. When they were thrown away, compassionate Buddhist monks collected and buried these ears and noses in the Tōyōgunji Shrine in Kyoto, dedicated to Toyotomi. The graveyard is still found, a reminder of the barbaric Japanese behavior. The grave *Mimitsuka*, "the grave of the ears," is proudly shown to the public.<sup>1</sup> This insensitivity to the national feelings of Koreans contributes still today to inflaming Japanese–Korean relations.

Another incident added to Korean animosity against Japan. Two decades after their country had been forced to open by U.S. gunboat diplomacy in the mid-19th century, the Japanese government threatened open hostility against Korea during the so-called *Seikanron*, or "the debate on the conquest of Korea," a major political conflagration that raged in Japan in 1873. Three years later words turned into action. Japan took upon itself "the white man's burden" to "civilize" its neighbor and showed that it was an able student of Western imperialists and aggressors. In 1876 Japan applied its own gunboat diplomacy against Korea, forcing the Korean government to sign the Treaty of Kanghwa, Korea's first unequal treaty by which Japan

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<sup>1</sup> Seung-bog Cho, *Memoirs*, unpubl. ms.

secured extraterritoriality in Korea. This treaty resembled the unequal treaties that Japan had been forced to sign by Western powers. With Russia's expansion eastwards and Japan's increasing territorial appetite, the spheres of interests of Japan and Russia clashed at the end of the 19th century, and Japan became involved in wars with Russia and China over Korea. Japan's victories in the Sino–Japanese War 1894–95, which made Taiwan a Japanese colony, and in the Russo–Japanese War 1904–05, made Japan a recognized great power. These victories were seen to give Japan the right to take control over Korea and in 1910 the world applauded Japan's annexation of its neighbor. Looking upon Korea's fate, a leading European voice, the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, the father of geopolitics, rejoiced: "Japan is a great and chivalrous state, so it must be an honor, even a pleasure to be killed by it."<sup>2</sup>

The annexation of Korea by which the country was incorporated into Japan and seized to exist as a country lasted until the Japanese empire was dissolved in 1945 as a result of its defeat in World War II. From the Korean perspective, Japan's rule was degrading and oppressive.<sup>3</sup> Because of popular grievances and lingering memories in Korea, the legacy of the annexation with its exploitation, oppression and maltreatment of Koreans has had a lasting impact throughout the postwar period on relations between Japan and the two states that eventually emerged on the Korean Peninsula as a result of the great-power game.

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<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Kjellén, "Huru stater dö" [How states die] (1907), reprinted in his *Politiska essayer: Första samlingen* [Political essays: First collection] (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers, 1914), s. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Han-Kyo Kim, "Japanese Colonialism in Korea," in *Japan Examined: Perspectives on Modern Japanese History*, ed. Harry Wray and Hilary Conroy (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1983), 222.

## The Cold War Period: The Onset of Japanese–DPRK Non-Relations

The relations between Japan and the DPRK have been heavily influenced by the legacy of Japan's colonialism as well as the international context. Those who have ruled North Korea since 1948 had been active as guerillas fighting against Japan or are their descendents. Added to this was the fact that post-war Japan has had to cope with its legacy as a former brutal colonial power.<sup>4</sup> Also the international situation has had an impact for the simple reason that however "the Korean question" is interpreted, it is a result of great-power politics. Japan's close relations with the United States and increasingly intimate relations with the ROK, as well as the DPRK's close relationship with China and the Soviet Union/Russia, have had a major impact. Even though the DPRK and the ROK were founded in 1948, three years after the end of World War II, that Japan and the DPRK still today do not have official relations can be seen as a result of the war. In 1948 Japan was occupied by the Allied powers and according to a legalistic interpretation had no foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> With Japan solidly anchored in the Western U.S.-led bloc that was pitted against the Soviet-led Communist bloc to which the DPRK belonged, there were few incentives for Japan to strive for relations with the regime in the northern part of Korea even after Japan had regained its sovereignty in 1952, a year when the Korean War was still raging.

South Korea was different. Negotiations between Japan and the ROK for diplomatic relations commenced in 1951. The way forward was rocky, however, and it took fourteen years until a treaty was signed in 1965. The key actor behind was the United States which exerted pressure on Japan and the ROK, since Washington could ill afford abysmal relations between two of its allies in East Asia in a situation when the Vietnam War was escalat-

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<sup>4</sup> Inoguchi Takashi, *Nihon no Asia seisaku: Ajia kara mita fushin to kitai* [Japan's Asia policy: Distrust and expectations seen from Asia] (Tokyo: NTT shuppan, 2003), 311.

<sup>5</sup> This is for instance the starting-point for a comprehensive treatment of Japan's foreign policy in seven volumes issued by Sanseidō in 1983–85. See Ishimaru Kazuto, Matsumoto Hirokazu, Yamamoto Tsuyoshi, *Ugokidashita Nihon gaikō* [Japan's foreign policy taking off], Sengo Nihon gaikōshi, II (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1983), 1.

ing.<sup>6</sup> All outstanding issues between Japan and the ROK were declared to be settled. To settle the property claims, Japan paid US\$45 million over a ten-year period. It also provided a grant-in-aid of US\$300 million and US\$500 million in loans as a “gesture of good will.”<sup>7</sup>

Both the way the agreement between Japan and the ROK was reached and its contents have impacted on the discussion between Japan and the DPRK over normalization. Ominous for Japan’s relations with not only the ROK but both Koreas was that Japan’s only apology for the oppression and suffering of the Koreans in the past was offered by Foreign Minister Shiina Etsusaburō, when he arrived in Seoul in February 1965 and issued a statement at the airport “deeply reflecting on the unfortunate past.”<sup>8</sup> There were but two problems with Shiina’s statement. It made it unclear whether it was Japan, the Japanese government, or the foreign minister himself that apologized.<sup>9</sup> This became a seed to future frictions between the two countries, since South Koreans were largely dissatisfied that there was no reference in any of the documents to a Japanese apology.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, in the expression used by Shiina, *fukaku hansei suru*, above translated as “deeply reflecting,” *hansei* means “to turn back to oneself and examine” and is ambiguous as it can be interpreted as either “to reflect upon (oneself)” and “to repent for” and these can be distinguished only by context.<sup>11</sup> Popular discontent in the ROK gradually waned concurrently with its improving economic situation and eventual democratization but anti-Japanese sentiments remained simmering beneath the surface and have occasionally flared up. An important step to rid relations of ill feelings was the apology that Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō of Japan extended during South Korean President Kim Dae-jung’s state visit to Japan in 1998. The reconciliation that was expressly stated in the Joint Declaration issued after their meeting was reached when

<sup>6</sup> Kwan Bong Kim, *The Korea–Japan Treaty Crisis and the Instability of the Korean Political System* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 78.

<sup>7</sup> Chong-Sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 54.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Takasaki Sōji, “Gendai no Nitchō kankei” [Presentday Japanese–North Korean relations], in *Nitchō kankeishi o kangaeru* [To think about the history of Japanese–North Korean relations], ed. Rekishigaku kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1989), 164.

<sup>9</sup> Pointed out in *Fujita Yoshirō, Kiroku Shiina Etsusaburō* [The records of Shiina Etsusaburō], Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shiina Etsusaburō tsuitōroku, 1982), 52.

<sup>10</sup> Lee, *Japan and Korea*, 54f.

<sup>11</sup> Seung-bog Cho, *Language and society in East Asia*. Selected articles edited by Bert Edström (Stockholm: Center for Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University, 1991), 177.



Obuchi readily complied with Kim's suggestion on the wording of Japan's apology.<sup>12</sup> Despite that this apology was meant to settle issues once and for all, several instances of popular discontent with Japan have been seen in the ROK in recent years, proving that the burden of history continues to haunt relations between the two countries.

A further problem of the 1965 Japan–ROK agreement for Japan's relations with the DPRK is that the treaty lacks a clause on reparations. Notwithstanding this, the Park Chung-hee government in Seoul saw the funds that Japan would provide as essential for the ROK's economic development plans and accepted the agreement.<sup>13</sup> The two parties to the negotiations had taken part in a negotiation that was clearly asymmetrical, which explains the outcome. The result for Japan of its negotiations with the South Korean government was reached in a process that closely resembled Japan's handling of reparations to Burma and other Southeast Asian countries that had been ransacked by Japan during World War II. Burma had to settle for US\$200 million after having requested much more, the Philippines wanted US\$8 billion but received US\$550 million, and Indonesia pushed for a hefty US\$17.2 billion but got only US\$223 million.<sup>14</sup> The agreement reached with Seoul over compensation for the 35 years of colonial rule was quite advantageous to Japan. Not only was there no apology, stretched out over a ten-year period, the economic burden to Japan was limited. A further advantage for Japan of the agreement reached with the ROK was that Japan did not pay in cash but in kind. This was beneficial for Japan in two senses; it did not have to tap its scarce foreign currency reserves and the agreement facilitated for Japanese companies to penetrate the rapidly expanding South Korean market.

Documents declassified in 2005 by the South Korean government showed that after receiving US\$800 million in grants and soft loans from Japan that

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<sup>12</sup> Wakamiya Yoshibumi, *The Postwar Conservative View of Japan: How the Political Right Has Delayed Japan's Coming to Terms with Its History of Aggression in Asia* (Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation, 1999), 256ff.

<sup>13</sup> Brian Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s: From Antagonism to Adjustment* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1993), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Kitaoka Shin'ichi, "Baishō mondai no seijirikigaku (1945–59)" [A study of the political dynamics of the reparations problem (1945–59)], in *Sensō-fukkō-hatten: Shōwa seijishi ni okeru kenryoku to kōsō* [War, recovery, development: Power and structure in the political history of the Shōwa period], ed. Kitaoka Shin'ichi and Mikuriya Takashi (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 2000), 207.

was in actuality compensation for the annexation period, the Park Chung-hee government agreed in 1965 not to demand any more compensation after the conclusion of the treaty, either at the government-to-government level or individual-to-government level.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the declassified diplomatic documents show that the South Korean government assumed the responsibility for compensating individuals on a lump sum basis.<sup>16</sup>

With the 1965 agreement, state-to-state relations were established between Japan and the ROK after fourteen years of negotiations. Opposition forces in neither country rejoiced, however, and intra- and extra-parliamentary protests took place in both countries. Public opposition to the normalization negotiations ran high and it required martial law in South Korea to tame the demonstrators. The Park Chung-hee government rammed the documents through the National Assembly, while the main opposition party in Japan, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), took to violent action in the Diet to stop ratification but did not succeed.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "S. Korea discloses sensitive documents," UPI.com, January 17, 2005, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/2005/01/17/SKorea-discloses-sensitive-documents/UPI-38131105952315/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2005/01/17/SKorea-discloses-sensitive-documents/UPI-38131105952315/)

<sup>16</sup> "Compensation for Colonial Victims Is Not Just a Legal Problem," *The Chosun Ilbo*, January 17, 2005, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2005/01/17/2005011761043.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2005/01/17/2005011761043.html)

<sup>17</sup> Lee, *Japan and Korea*, 54f.

## Japan's Bifurcated Korea Policy

The agreement reached by Japan and the ROK initiated a bifurcated Japanese policy towards the two states on the Korean Peninsula. After 1965 Japan embarked on a course with rapidly expanding economic exchange with the ROK in line with the strategy it used in its dealings with countries in Southeast Asia. Aid and loans were provided by Japan in kind not in cash, which turned out to be a clever instrument to develop new and promising markets. It was a policy that had been outlined by Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke in his policy speech in the Diet in 1959, when he announced his government's intention "to strengthen the basis for the development of overseas markets through aid funds."<sup>18</sup>

When the agreement reached by Japan and the ROK began to be implemented, it meant that the gap between Japanese–ROK and Japanese–DPRK exchanges increased. While trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) relations between Japan and the ROK expanded rapidly, relations barely existed between Japan and the DPRK. Hatoyama Ichirō (prime minister 1954–56) took the first step to initiate economic exchange between Tokyo and Pyongyang. He saw restoring of relations with the Soviet Union and China as important and as a corollary declared that he was willing to start discussions in order to promote economic exchange with the DPRK.<sup>19</sup> However, Japan was closely linked to the United States and had to tread carefully since the DPRK was an enemy of the United States, and it took until 1962 for small-scale direct cargo shipments to begin.<sup>20</sup> A modest trade exchange began when the principle of *seikei bunri* was applied also to relations with the DPRK; that is, the "separation of politics and economics" that had been applied by Japan since the days of Yoshida Shigeru (prime minister 1946–47, 1948–54). This had made it possible for Japan to conclude a non-governmental barter trade agreement with the People's Republic of China that the

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<sup>18</sup> *Rekidai naikaku sōridaijin enzetsushū* [Collection of prime ministerial policy speeches], ed. Naikaku seido hyakunenshi hensan iinkai (Tokyo: Ōkurashō insatsukyoku, 1985), 602.

<sup>19</sup> Ko Jon Sok, *Sengo Chō-Nichi kankeishi* [A history of postwar relations between North Korea and Japan] (Tokyo: Tahara shoten, 1974), 184.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel S. Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, [2007]), 50.

United States tolerated even when the Cold War was at its chilliest stage.<sup>21</sup> That relations with the DPRK were based on *seikei bunri* was admitted by Prime Minister Satō Eisaku in 1965, when he indicated that Japan would not establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK but continue to trade with it.<sup>22</sup>

Mobilizing the *seikei bunri* principle enabled Japan to pursue relations not only with the ROK but also the DPRK. While exchange with the South expanded, exchange with the North continued on a modest scale, even after the DPRK's anti-Japanese diatribe had peaked in 1965, when the negotiations for an agreement between Japan and the ROK were to be concluded.<sup>23</sup>

During the *détente* period, moves were seen to ameliorate relations.<sup>24</sup> Steps taken in this direction became examples of *yatō gaikō*, "opposition party diplomacy," with the JSP regularly dispatching delegations to the DPRK, despite that Japan did not have diplomatic relations with the country. The most notable visit was paid in 1971 by Tokyo's governor Minobe Ryōkichi, who had been elected as the candidate for the Communist and Socialist parties.<sup>25</sup> Another important step was the establishment of the Japanese Diet League for Promotion of Friendship with the DPRK in 1971.<sup>26</sup>

The two Koreas policy, which Satō Eisaku (prime minister 1964–72) had *de facto* begun, was abolished by his successor Tanaka Kakuei (prime minister 1972–74). After his successful establishment of rapprochement and normalization with China in 1972, Tanaka is on record as saying that "Japan cannot help but recognize that there exists two Koreas on the Korean Peninsula and the co-existence of the two is the diplomatic goal we desire."<sup>27</sup> That he took the first notable step to improve relations with the DPRK since Hatoyama

<sup>21</sup> Bert Edström, *Japan's Evolving Foreign Policy Doctrine: From Yoshida to Miyazawa* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999, 1999), 23. On *seikei bunri*, see Chihiro Hosoya, "From the Yoshida Letter to the Nixon Shock," in *The United States and Japan in the Postwar World*, ed. Akira Iriye and Warren I. Cohen (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Edström, *Japan's Evolving Foreign Policy Doctrine*, 185.

<sup>23</sup> Byung Chul Koh, *The Foreign Policy of North Korea* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 194.

<sup>24</sup> Masao Okonogi, "Japan's Policy toward North Korea: Diplomatic Normalization Talks and the Nuclear Inspection Issue," in *Foreign Relations of North Korea during Kim Il Sung's Last Days*, Doug Joong Kim (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1994), 194.

<sup>25</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Japan's Engagement Dilemmas with North Korea," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (July–August 2001), 551.

<sup>26</sup> Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s*, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Tanaka as quoted in Tae Youl Paek, "Korean Unification and Japan's Foreign Policy: A Historical Overview," in *Japan and Korean Unification*, ed. Young-Sun Lee and Masao Okonogi (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1999), 39.

in the 1950s might be explained by that Tanaka had the same ambition as Hatoyama to expand Japan's diplomatic horizon – Hatoyama restored relations with the Soviet Union in 1956, while Tanaka succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1972.

Tanaka's foreign minister Ōhira Masayoshi followed up in his policy speech on foreign policy in the Diet in January 1974, declaring that he was looking forward to broadened economic, cultural, humanitarian, sports and other exchanges with the DPRK.<sup>28</sup> This ambition resembled what Kim Il Sung had spoken of three years before, when he indicated in an interview with the Japanese newspaper *Asahi shimbun* that he was looking forward to diplomatic relations with Japan but advocated the establishment first of trade, free travel, cultural exchange and exchange of journalists.<sup>29</sup>

Tanaka's position on Korea was continued by his successor Miki Takeo (prime minister 1974–76), who distanced Tokyo from Satō Eisaku's line of linking Japan's security to that of the ROK, which was done in a joint communiqué after his meeting in 1969 with President Richard Nixon in which Satō acknowledged that the security of South Korea was essential to Japan's own security.<sup>30</sup> Now, Miki identified instead Japan's security interests not with the ROK but with peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>31</sup> Since Japan was solidly placed within the confines of the U.S. alliance structure in East Asia, there was not much opportunity for bold moves on part of the Japanese government. This became even clearer with Nakasone Yasuhiro (prime minister 1982–87) as Japanese premier. His predecessor Suzuki Zenkō (prime minister 1980–82) had messed up relations with the ROK and Nakasone set about to repair them. In 1982 Nakasone became the first Japanese premier to visit Seoul, where he expressed "deep regret" for the colonial past and agreed to provide US\$4 billion to support the ROK as an anti-Communist bulwark.<sup>32</sup> Eighteen years after the Japanese–ROK rapprochement in 1965, Nakasone considerably upped the gap in Japan's relations with the two Koreas.

<sup>28</sup> Ōhira Masayoshi, Policy speech on foreign policy, January 21, 1974, available at: <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/fam/19740121.SXJ.html>

<sup>29</sup> Okonogi, "Japan's Policy toward North Korea," 193f.

<sup>30</sup> Michael J. Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 114.

<sup>31</sup> Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Takahama Tatō, *Nakasone gaiseiron: Sōri wa nani o mesashite iru no ka?* [Nakasone's diplomacy: What is the prime minister aiming at?] (Tokyo: PHP kenkyūsho, 1983), ch. 2.

## The Early Post-Cold War Period: Initiation of Governmental Contacts

In 1985, Michail Gorbachev was elected secretary-general of the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party. At 54 he was its youngest member and turned out to be not only young but also having new ideas that when they were introduced were so revolutionary that they significantly contributed to end the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's introduction of processes that resulted in the end of the Cold War had far-reaching impact on developments in Northeast Asia, not least the relations between Japan and the DPRK.

Had the development of relations advanced slowly during the initial decades of the postwar period, things began to move faster at the end of the 1980s. Again it was demonstrated the degree to which the nature of relations between Japan and the two Koreas relied on factors outside of the control of the parties themselves. The creation of two states on the Korean Peninsula was a result of great-power politics and the evolution of the relations they were involved in relied on the superpowers. For Koreans, in particular, the degree to which outside powers decided their fate was painfully obvious. The same was true for Japan to a large extent. A long time had passed since the country was a decisive actor whose sphere of influence incorporated Korea.

Gorbachev's appearance on the world stage led to changes to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Its normalization with China began to undermine the structure of Cold-War politics. This played into the hands of the ROK. Its standing was at an all-time high after the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 and its economic clout had increased as a result of its economic successes. Both China and the Soviet Union, Pyongyang's most important supporters, began improving economic and political ties with Seoul. In contrast, the international standing of the DPRK had sunk drastically as a result of its agents detonating bombs in Bangkok in 1983 and on a Korean passenger plane off the coast of Burma in 1987. It was not made better by its worsening economic situation.

The election of Roh Tae-woo as South Korean president in 1988 proved decisive. He used the improved standing of the South to go on the offensive

and announced that he was willing to cooperate with the North and its efforts to improve relations with Japan and the United States.<sup>33</sup> This diplomatic offensive was launched at a time when Japan's standing in the world was at its apex. At the end of the 1980s, there was much talk of that Japan was going to surpass the United States as an economic power, and this boosted Japan's regional leadership ambitions and wetted its hubris. President Roh's declaration of support for other countries to warm political relations with Pyongyang gave Japan the option of sounding out the possibility of opening diplomatic relations with the DPRK. Previously, Seoul had not looked favorably on Japan's two Koreas policy.<sup>34</sup>

Japan had begun to see the DPRK as a threat after its sizeable military build-up, especially in the 1980s. The possibility of either Korea being suddenly reunified under terms favorable to the increasingly more powerful ROK or a desperate DPRK lashing out with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) seemed very real. Japan therefore found it increasingly difficult to be a bystander in inter-Korean relations that had the potential to directly impact Japan or to become the driving force of new and uncertain international developments throughout the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>35</sup>

For the Japanese government it was obvious that it had to act. Gorbachev had formulated a new Asia-Pacific strategy in his Vladivostok speech in July 1986 that dealt with a Soviet recognition of Seoul. Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru decided it was time to act. As a member of the Tanaka Kakuei faction and true to the legacy of his political mentor, Takeshita moved on the DPRK. In January 1989 the Japanese foreign ministry issued a statement that Japan was prepared to "enter into discussions of any type with North Korea on the entire range of peninsula issues with no preconditions whatsoever,"<sup>36</sup> and in February Takeshita declared in his policy speech in the Diet that he

<sup>33</sup> Okonogi, "Japan's Policy toward North Korea," 195f.

<sup>34</sup> Masao Okonogi, "The Political Dynamics of Japan–North Korea Relations," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 13 (Summer 1989), 51–65; as quoted in David Fouse, "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy: Hedging toward Autonomy?" in *Japan in a Dynamic Asia: Coping with the New Security Challenges*, ed. Yoichiro Sato and Satu Limaye (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 137.

<sup>35</sup> Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World*, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Byung Chul Koh, "North Korea–Japan Relations," in *Korea and Japan: Searching for Harmony and Cooperation in a Changing Era*, ed. In-Taek Hyun and Masao Okonogi (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1995), 110–11.



wanted to promote relations with the DPRK.<sup>37</sup> Most decisive was his move at a meeting with the budget committee of the Diet in March, when he apologized to “all the people of the Korea Peninsula” for Japan’s past actions inflicting great suffering and damage during the annexation period. His use of “all” made it clear that also Koreans in the north were included.<sup>38</sup> To demonstrate good will, he expanded the scope of the apology compared to what Foreign Minister Shiina had offered the South in 1965, from *fukai hansei*, “deep reflection,” to *fukai hansei to ikan no i*, “deep reflection and regret.” Similarly, he was the first Japanese government official to use the official name of the North.

Shortly afterwards, secret diplomatic contacts between Japan and the DPRK began. Opposition party diplomacy came into play. In Japan’s post-war diplomacy, opposition parties have sometimes played a key role for developing relations with countries with which Japan did not have diplomatic relations and it was difficult for representatives of the Japanese government to visit.<sup>39</sup> A famous case is the crucial role played by Komeito’s Chairman Takeiri Yoshikatsu for paving the way for Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei’s visit to Beijing in order to normalize relations with China in 1972.<sup>40</sup> In the case of the DPRK, the primary actor was the JSP. The party had long had amicable party-to-party relations with the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) which came in handy for the Japanese government, since it could use the JSP’s informal ties with the DPRK as a channel to convey its messages to Pyongyang. After Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki in June 1990 reiterated Japan’s interest in promoting relations with Pyongyang and indicated that Japan was ready to apologize for its colonial rule and open a dialogue without preconditions, the response came from the DPRK. It was at a stage when Pyongyang was extremely concerned about the fall of the Berlin Wall

<sup>37</sup> Takeshita Noboru, Policy speech in the Diet, February 10, 1989, available at: <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/pm/19890210.SWJ.html>

<sup>38</sup> Takeshita’s statement is reproduced in Tanaka Akihiko, *Ajia no naka no Nihon* [Japan in Asia] (Tokyo: NTT shuppan, 2007), 60–61.

<sup>39</sup> Nakano Kunimi, “Gaikō ni okeru kokkai no yakuwari” [The role of the Diet in foreign policy], in *Kokkai to gaikō* [The Diet and foreign policy], ed. Nakano Kunimi (Tokyo: Shinsansha, 1997), 26f.

<sup>40</sup> Tanaka Akihiko, *Nitchū kankei, 1945–1990* [Japan–China relations, 1945–1990] (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1991), 76.



and the rapid departure of the Soviet Union and China away from their one-Korea policy. The DPRK shifted its interest to Japan.<sup>41</sup>

The key figure, working as a messenger, was Tanabe Makoto, a former secretary-general of the JSP, who had cordial relations with the KWP leadership and had visited the DPRK several times. He brought back its response to the Japanese overture after a visit to Pyongyang. The DPRK wanted to get results and for this wanted to approach an influential member of the ruling LDP but not one who held an official post. At a meeting with Secretary Ho Dam of the KWP, Tanabe was told that Pyongyang would welcome a LDP delegation led by a prominent member of the party. Tanabe recommended his personal friend Kanemaru Shin, a leading LDP politician who was vice-president of the party and had served as deputy prime minister.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps more important, Kanemaru was one of Japan's leading behind-the-scenes fixers.<sup>43</sup> Prime Minister Kaifu consented to sending a delegation to the DPRK led by Kanemaru. To pick Kanemaru as the leader of the delegation showed that the Japanese government meant business. To include members from the leading opposition party JSP in the delegation was a move to improve the likelihood that the delegation would succeed. Despite that Kanemaru was a heavyweight in the LDP and thus a political enemy to the JSP, Tanabe was a personal friend of Kanemaru.

Behind Kanemaru's acceptance to head the delegation to Pyongyang was that he had been moved when he was approached by the wife of the captain of the Japanese fishing boat *Dai 18 Fujisan maru*. She told him about the plight of her husband and his colleague, who had been in a the DPRK jail for seven years.<sup>44</sup> But there were also more mundane reasons. Kanemaru's wished not only to make his own name historic but also help his friend Tanabe become the JSP's No. 1 as well as "open a air hole" [*kaza-ana o akeru*].<sup>45</sup> Kanemaru's vanity proved to be the undoing of these ambitions.

<sup>41</sup> Tanaka, *Ajia no naka no Nihon*, 65.

<sup>42</sup> Okonogi, "Japan's Policy toward North Korea," 198.

<sup>43</sup> Jacob M. Schlesinger, *Shadow Shoguns: The Rise and Fall of Japan's Postwar Political Machine* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 161.

<sup>44</sup> Kanemaru Shin, "Jobun" [Preface], in Ishii Hajime, *Chikazuite kita tōi kuni* [A distant country getting closer] (Tokyo: Nihon seisansai hombu, 1991), i; Suzuki Tōichi, *Nagatachō no antō 8* [Nagatachō's secrets feuds, vol. 8] (Tokyo: Mainichi shimbunsha, 1990), 236.

<sup>45</sup> As revealed in Suzuki Tōichi, *Nagatachō no antō 9* [Nagatachō's secrets feuds, vol. 9] (Tokyo: Mainichi shimbunsha, 1991), 29. For *kaza-ana o akeru*, see Kanemaru, "Jobun," ii; see also "Kanemaru Shin–Tanabe Makoto taidan 'Ima, issō no hakusha

## The Kanemaru Delegation

The Kanemaru delegation visited Pyongyang on September 24–28, 1990. The delegation consisted of 13 MPs and 12 support personnel from the LDP, 10 MPs and five support personnel from the JSP, and 13 government officials, of which four were from the foreign ministry. The delegation was accompanied by 36 journalists.<sup>46</sup> Results were much more far-reaching than expected by Tokyo.<sup>47</sup> The speed and progress of the negotiations took the delegation by surprise. The mission had been sent to the DPRK to negotiate the release of two crewmen of the Japanese fishing boat *Dai 18 Fujisan maru* who were held captive by the DPRK, and agreement was reached on their release. Already at the first session that the Japanese had with Prime Minister Kim Yong Sam, the North Koreans went on the offensive and brought up the issue of diplomatic relations. Not prepared for Pyongyang's overture, the Japanese were taken off-guard. Overruling objections from foreign ministry officials, Kanemaru decided to approve clauses in the declaration that was to be issued at the end of the visit by the LDP and the JSP on the Japanese side and the KWP on the DPRK side. Consequently, the declaration called for normalization talks between the Japanese and DPRK governments and deepening of economic and cultural exchange. The three parties also agreed that Japan should "officially apologize and compensate" to the DPRK for "the enormous misfortunes and misery imposed on the Korean people for 36 years and the losses inflicted on the Korean people in the ensuing 45 years."<sup>48</sup> In Tokyo, senior LDP officials and news media were flabbergasted. Kanemaru was severely criticized for the promises of compensation he had extended, and which he had made on his own authority.

The concessions made by Kanemaru were done without consulting the United States or the ROK. The agreement he reached went far beyond Tokyo's agreement with Seoul in 1965 on compensation and jolted both Seoul and Washington. The ROK government was particularly concerned that the

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wo'" [Conversation between Kanemaru Shin and Tanabe Makoto, "Now, it's time to do more"], *Sekai*, April 1992, 44f.

<sup>46</sup> Ishii, *Chikazuite kita tōi kuni*, 236–42.

<sup>47</sup> Kanemaru, "Jobun," ii.

<sup>48</sup> For the text of the declaration, see Ishii, *Chikazuite kita tōi kuni*, 163–65.

large amount of reparations promised to the DPRK would impact on its own negotiations with the North.<sup>49</sup> Subsequently, Kanemaru flew to Seoul for a meeting with President Roh Tae-woo to express his regrets for having blindsided the South Koreans.<sup>50</sup> The U.S. ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost also requested a meeting with Kanemaru at which Kanemaru apologized for having gone over the head of the United States. Armacost stressed that Washington was concerned over financial aid being used for the DPRK's nuclear development programs. He requested that Japan make an inspection of the DPRK's nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a precondition in future normalization talks. Armacost found Kanemaru rather naïve, and is explicit about his displeasure of "diplomatic freelancing by politicians."<sup>51</sup>

The commitment made by the Kanemaru delegation that Japan would pay compensation also for the postwar period was bold to say the least, given the fact that representatives of the foreign ministry were included in the delegation. However, the declaration that clarified Japan's will to compensate also for the postwar period was an inter-party agreement entered into by Japan's two leading parties, the LDP and the JSP; no representatives of the Japanese foreign ministry signed the agreement.

The question remains as to why Kanemaru made commitments that proved to be unbecoming for Japanese diplomacy in the sense that the Japanese government did not find them acceptable. What turned out a blunder was a result of Kanemaru's foreign policy inexperience. While he was a powerhouse in domestic politics, he had little experience of diplomacy. His involvement in diplomacy was limited to visiting Taiwan once a year. He had not shown any interest whatsoever in Korea before becoming involved in the mission to Pyongyang.<sup>52</sup> Kanemaru's most flagrant mistake was to accept to meet Kim Il Sung with no other Japanese present. No notes were taken.<sup>53</sup> Whatever took place between Kanemaru and Kim became known to

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<sup>49</sup> Byung-jun Ahn, "Japanese Policy toward Korea," in *Japan's Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Coping with Change*, ed. Gerald Curtis (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 270.

<sup>50</sup> Takasaki Sōji, *Kenshō Nitchō kōshō* [An examination of the Japanese–North Korean negotiations] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2004), 35.

<sup>51</sup> Michael H. Armacost, *Friends or Rivals? The Insider's Account of U.S.–Japan Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 147f.

<sup>52</sup> Suzuki, *Nagatachō no antō* 8, 235.

<sup>53</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (London: Little, Brown and

the Japanese government only to the degree that Kanemaru informed about it. Thus, even if Kanemaru had been dispatched by the Japanese government to negotiate with the North Koreans, it could not be sure, *post festum*, to be briefed fully by Kanemaru. It must have worried Prime Minister Kaifu. What the Japanese prime minister knew for certain was that Kanemaru had gone further in his negotiations than had been anticipated beforehand.<sup>54</sup>

Even more problematic was the situation for the Japanese foreign ministry whose officials had been bulldozed by Kanemaru. The most alarming for the ministry was probably the declaration signed by the LDP, the JSP and the KWP. To the ministry, the declaration issued was a party-to-party agreement that was not binding for the Japanese government. The fact that the Japan's two leading political parties accepted to go as far as to lash out against their own country jointly with the ruling party of the DPRK dictatorship was strange indeed. Appointing a delegation composed largely of party politicians who were dispatched to engage in party-to-party negotiations went counter to the interests of the ministry. The Kanemaru mission became an embarrassment to the ministry because of what the then U.S. ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost considered the "sloppy communiqué," and led to irritation because the foreign policy professionals had had their role expropriated by politicians.<sup>55</sup> To appoint a delegation with diplomatic tasks composed by politicians and not professional diplomats went counter to the diplomatic style that had been established in the early postwar period, when the prime ministers had their background as diplomats. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru was one of them and, as the "father" of Japan's postwar foreign policy, his idea was that foreign policy should be handled by professionals, that is, diplomats and he took firm control over all aspects of Japan's foreign affairs.<sup>56</sup> While Yoshida's successors were not as strong-willed and stubborn as he was, his habit bred a pattern that stuck. It has been the professionals, that is, foreign ministry bureaucrats, who have taken charge and come up with policies, not prime ministers, with some few notable exceptions. On the other hand, the few premiers who have been responsible for important breakthroughs in foreign policy have invariably been seen as "great" prime ministers.

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Company, 1997), 211f.

<sup>54</sup> Tanaka, *Ajia no naka no Nihon*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Armacost, *Friends or Rivals?* 146f.

<sup>56</sup> Edström, *Japan's Evolving Foreign Policy Doctrine*, ch. 1.

When it came to the crunch, Kanemaru's blunders nullified the breakthrough that might have been possible. In his memoirs, Ambassador Armacost writes that Kanemaru was a powerful politician who felt no compelling need to reveal every detail of his intentions to a new and reputedly weak prime minister. He and his associates evidently exceeded their brief in Pyongyang, caught up in the ostentatious warmth of the North Koreans' reception.<sup>57</sup>

This seems an apt description given what occurred during the negotiations in Pyongyang. It is not unlikely that Kanemaru as Japan's pre-eminent political don at the time forgot that Kaifu was the prime minister. One should not forget that it was Kanemaru who had been the kingmaker when Kaifu became prime minister. He was an unlikely choice since he was no more than an official of the LDP's smallest faction, and became prime minister because he was supported by Kanemaru who was the leader of the Takeshita faction.<sup>58</sup>

There has been much speculation that Kanemaru's willingness to promise compensation to the North may have had ulterior motives. Over the years since Japan began to give aid to other countries, there have been countless cases of Japanese ODA money ending up in the pockets of Japanese politicians. If Japan were to provide up to US\$10 billion in the form of "economic cooperation" to the DPRK, Japanese companies would have been awarded contracts financed by aid, and this would have resulted in kickbacks to the Takeshita faction as the initiator of these funds. Even more sinister accusations were directed at Kanemaru when he fell from grace in 1993. When unmarked gold bars were uncovered at a raid on his office during the Sagawa kyūbin investigations of 1993, they were alleged to have originated in the DPRK, although it was never proven.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Armacost, *Friends or Rivals?* 149.

<sup>58</sup> Honzawa Jirō, *Ura kara mita Jimintō habatsu* [LDP factions viewed from behind] (Tokyo: Ēru shuppansha, 1993), 87.

<sup>59</sup> Eric Johnston, "The North Korean Abduction Issue and Its Effect on Japanese Domestic Politics," Japan Policy Research Institute, *Working Paper*, No. 101 (June 2004), <http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp101.html>

## Negotiations over Diplomatic Recognition

Kanemaru was put through the gauntlet after his return to Japan. This brought to bear the degree to which Japan's policy vis-à-vis the DPRK was linked to the Japanese relationships with the United States and the ROK and how constrained Japan's freedom to negotiate was. The Korean Peninsula was still the hotspot of great-power politics. The agreements that the Kanemaru delegation had acceded to were nullified as a result of the intervention of, primarily, the South Korean government. One leading international relations scholar, Iokibe Makoto, has described the outcome of the Kanemaru delegation as "a small defeat for Japanese diplomacy." According to Iokibe, if Japan seriously wanted to restore relations, Prime Minister Kaifu should have stood at the forefront.<sup>60</sup>

Even while the breakthrough in relations with the DPRK that had been in the offing as a result of the Kanemaru delegation almost immediately dissipated due to Kanemaru's diplomatic ineptitude, two results of the negotiations in Pyongyang remained. They had been at the party level but already before the delegation went to Pyongyang, it had been agreed that negotiations at the governmental level would commence. Both the Japanese and the DPRK governments stuck to this agreement. It was also important in that it had been confirmed that Japan promised to officially apologize for the hardships inflicted during the annexation; the Japanese side took this as a matter of course.<sup>61</sup>

In the wake of the debacle for Japanese diplomacy that the Kanemaru delegation constituted, Japan announced four principles that would guide its policy henceforth: (1) Japan shall conduct negotiations with a view toward enhancing the peace and stability of the entire Korean Peninsula; (2) Japan–North Korean normalization shall not occur at the expense of friendly relations between Japan and South Korea; (3) while responding positively to property claims arising from Japan's thirty-six-year colonial rule, Japan will not agree to compensate North Korea for the postwar period; and (4) North

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<sup>60</sup> Iokibe Makoto, "Japanese diplomacy after the Cold War," in *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, Iokibe Makoto (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 177.

<sup>61</sup> Wakamiya, *The Postwar Conservative View of Japan*, 249.

Korea's acceptance of IAEA inspections of nuclear facilities is important to Japan's national security.<sup>62</sup>

Probably to continue the drive towards normalization negotiations, Kaifu reiterated his "sincere apologies and profound regrets" to all Koreans in his policy speech to the Diet in October 1990.<sup>63</sup> Initial negotiations during three meetings between the two foreign ministries were held at the end of 1990 to prepare for the upcoming negotiations at governmental level. The two parties agreed on the agenda for these negotiations.<sup>64</sup> Starting in January 1991, negotiations over mutual diplomatic recognition took place but halted in November 1992 after eight rounds. The reason for what was in reality a breakdown, was a chain of accelerating demands from Japan and the DPRK's intransigent anti-Japanese stance. The negotiations did not diminish the gap between two parties but increased it. At the first meeting, the DPRK demanded reparations and that Japan pay compensation for the colonial and post-colonial period. This demand was natural given the fact that the Kanemaru delegation had acceded to it, but now Japan acknowledged only compensatory payment for property claims.<sup>65</sup> As noted above, the compensation issue was a key element of the 1965 agreement between Japan and the ROK, and Japan had paid US\$45 million in compensation for property claims.

It seems that both the DPRK and Japan made basic mistakes in their negotiation strategies at this stage. Pyongyang's mistake was to base its demand for compensation on the claim that the Korean people and Japan had been belligerents, not on the maltreatment and exploitation that Japan had exposed Koreans to during the annexation. On the other hand, a mistake made by the Japanese government was that it denied that Japan had agreed in 1965 to pay compensation for the annexation period, hiding that the US\$800 million provided to the ROK in 1965 was actually compensation for the prewar period, albeit labeled "economic assistance." As noted above, the fact that the "loans" to be paid out over ten year were seen as compensation for the annexation period by both the Japanese and South

<sup>62</sup> Koh, "North Korea–Japan Relations," 115.

<sup>63</sup> Edström, *Japan's evolving foreign policy doctrine*, 149.

<sup>64</sup> Okonogi, "Japan's Policy toward North Korea," 205.

<sup>65</sup> Yamamoto Tsuyoshi, "Nitchō kokkō seijōka kōshō no shōten" [The focal points of the negotiations on diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea], *Sekai*, April 1992, 81f.



Korean governments was revealed in 2005, when the South Korean government made public 1200 pages of previously classified documents relating to the Japanese–ROK negotiations leading up to the 1965 agreement.

In line with the policy that the Japanese government announced after the Kanemaru debacle, Japan demanded that the DPRK promptly accept IAEA inspection of its nuclear facilities, which the DPRK declined since it saw it as an issue between itself and the United States. However, its eagerness to reach results had been obvious in its actions in the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War and surfaced again during the third round of negotiations. Pyongyang proposed immediate normalization after the issue of normalization had been separated from other issues, which could then be discussed. Japan did not respond favorably to this proposal but instead accelerated its demands. To continue negotiations, its preconditions were that North Korea: (1) accept inspection of its nuclear facilities; (2) immediately reopen the South–North Prime Ministers Talks; and (3) join the United Nations simultaneously with South Korea. The leader of the Japanese delegation asserted that without inspection of the DPRK’s nuclear facilities there could be no domestic support in Japan for progressing in other matters. He also brought up the issue of “Li Un-hye,” believed to be Japanese, and rumored to have been the teacher of the DPRK agent, who had been convicted of blowing up the Korean Airlines passenger plane in 1987.<sup>66</sup> The sensitiveness of the “Li Un-hye issue” could be seen in the fact that it twice was the occasion for the DPRK to terminate negotiations. In November 1992, after having met eight times, the negotiations between Japan and the DPRK ended without any agreement.

As remarked above, the aftermath of the Kanemaru delegation showed that Japan had to take into consideration both U.S. and South Korean views in dealing with the DPRK. This linkage was now brought in by Japan, explicitly in the case of the ROK and indirectly in the case of the U.S. The three preconditions that Japan specified were in line with recognition of the existence of the linkage. The scope of negotiations thus broadened and was not a question of bilateral matters only. The linkage to the domestic audience added a further complication to the negotiation process. In hindsight, bringing up the Japanese woman suspected of having been an instructor of

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<sup>66</sup> Okonogi, “Japan’s Policy toward North Korea,” 208.



the Korean agent was a serious matter for the DPRK. Its official line at this stage was that these accusations were just outright lies.

The reason why Japan took into account also other parties in its negotiation bid was not only because its DPRK policy had become a concern also of the ROK and the United States in the aftermath of the Kanemaru delegation. It was also important that the problems created by the DPRK grow larger than being merely bilateral by the terrorist activities perpetrated by the DPRK in 1983 and 1987, its nuclear ambitions and its military buildup. For the Japanese government, the encounter with the DPRK was not confined to being a bilateral matter; it involved the regional security architecture.

## Ten-Year Impasse 1992–2002

The decision to send the Kanemaru delegation to Pyongyang in 1990 was in response to changes in the international political situation. The Japanese government was increasingly aware that Japan could be overtaken by developments if it did not act proactively. At the same time, the DPRK regime was acutely aware that China and the Soviet Union, its two main supporters in international affairs and the two countries that propped up the North's faltering economy, were increasingly lured by the South Korean economic successes. Thus, both Japan and the DPRK had an interest in improving relations. However, the hullabaloo around the Kanemaru mission resulted in Japan backing down from the results reached by the delegation; its aftermath showed that Japan was not free to act on its own but had to take the interests of the U.S. and the ROK into account or maybe even had to devise a policy in concert with them.

After the Kanemaru adventure and the eight round of normalization talks, a ten-year impasse evolved in relations between Japan and the DPRK. Relations were stuck in a Cold War-type maelstrom of rhetorical hostilities and adversarial actions. Had the Cold War ended in Europe, the expressions of animosity parading in relations between Japan and the DPRK showed that the situation in East Asia differed from Europe. With Japan linking its DPRK policy to the ROK and the United States, its action radius became limited. With this linkage that was part of Japan's new DPRK policy, the Japanese policy became also a function of great power politics. Japan's policy moved from being based on its own priorities, as seen in the dispatch of the Kanemaru delegation, to being coordinated with the U.S. and the ROK. But it was also because the DPRK upped the stakes by indulging in aggressive rhetoric, demonstrating assertiveness over its nuclear development program as well as military actions.

As can be noted in Japan's new policy vis-à-vis the DPRK, one of its elements was the importance paid by Japan to the IAEA inspections of the DPRK's nuclear facilities. In 1992, Foreign Minister Watanabe Michio reiterated this stand and said that inspections of the DPRK's nuclear capabilities

by the IAEA was a precondition for talks about normalization.<sup>67</sup> What he added was a hint at what was some years later to emerge as the key issue and main obstacle to improving Japan–DPRK relations – the abductions of Japanese citizens. But Watanabe was cautious and only said that this issue would be treated separately. That the foreign minister was cautious was understandable. At this time, what Japan knew was only guesswork based on rumors and speculation, so there was no solid basis for taking action, and the DPRK authorities denied vehemently any involvement in the abductions of Japanese citizens. Japan’s focus was instead on the DPRK’s noticeable military build up, including the increasingly observable indications of Pyongyang acquiring nuclear and missile capabilities.

After the sour treatment of the results reached by the Kanemaru delegation, the fact that Japan’s relations with the DPRK were solidly embedded in the context created by U.S. policy was evident. Thus, Japan had to acquiesce in the U.S. view that it might become necessary to use more coercive measures so that the DPRK could be brought into compliance with the IAEA inspection regime. In May 1993 it became evident that there were good reasons for this stance, when the DPRK launched a Nodong-1 missile into the Sea of Japan. This missile launch demonstrated that DPRK missiles could reach the southern half of Japan including Osaka and caused considerable concern in Japan. Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi wanted nevertheless to keep this news off the front pages to avoid further escalation of hostilities. He did not succeed, however, since Deputy Cabinet Secretary Ishihara Nobuo leaked the news.<sup>68</sup> When the DPRK withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993, concern grew in Tokyo. Subsequently, no less than three prime ministers in a row, Miyazawa Kiichi (1991–93), Hosokawa Morihiro (1993–94) and Hata Tsutomu (1994), described the DPRK as a great threat to Japanese security.<sup>69</sup>

In April 1994 the DPRK removed spent fuel rods from its nuclear reactor in Yongbyon and refused to segregate rods that could provide evidence of

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<sup>67</sup> Melanie Kintz, “Japan’s foreign policy toward North Korea since 1990,” paper prepared for the Annual MPSA Conference 2004 Chicago, April 15–18, 2004, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Nishimura Shingo and Nishioka Tsutomu, “Amerika no kaku wo mochikome” [Bring American nuclear weapons to Japan], *Voice* (April 2003), 112–13.

<sup>69</sup> Ishihara Nobuo, *Kantei 2668 nichi: Seisaku kettei no butaiura* [2668 days in the Prime Minister’s Office: What’s behind the political decisions] (Tokyo: NHK shuppan, 1995), 49.

a plutonium-based nuclear weapon program.<sup>70</sup> At this time, Japan thought that the most effective countermeasure would be to work through the IAEA or decisions taken by the UN Security Council, so it did not take direct action itself.<sup>71</sup> It was obvious to Tokyo that developments proved that China had to be involved in the handling of the threat that the DPRK posed to Northeast Asia.<sup>72</sup> That China played an important role was not a new insight. It had guided Tokyo's actions taken prior to the Kanemaru delegation's visit to Pyongyang in 1990, when Japanese representatives discussed Japanese relations with the DPRK with Chinese authorities.<sup>73</sup>

"The Korea issue" is a result of great-power politics and whether Japan liked it or not, the DPRK's actions dragged Japan into high politics. Since Japan had a mutual security treaty with the United States and the outcome of the Kanemaru delegation showed that it had become a necessity for the Japanese government to coordinate its DPRK policy with the Americans, Japan had to start considering a switch to sanctions when this became an option for the United States. While this option was put on the table in Japan, it was discarded, not least because the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ, formerly the JSP) as a member of the ruling coalition was an old friend of the DPRK and resisted any move to accede to U.S. pressure for the imposition of sanctions.<sup>74</sup> A containment of the DPRK, such as Japanese participation in a naval blockade brought up by the Americans, was also deemed "totally impossible" for Japan according to Deputy Cabinet Secretary Ishihara Nobuo.<sup>75</sup> The risk that the DPRK could resort to a violent and possibly preemptive response to the imposition of sanctions was seen as simply too great.<sup>76</sup> The pressure on Japan to engage in proactive activities

<sup>70</sup> Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World*, 44.

<sup>71</sup> Ishihara, *Kantei 2668 nichi*, 51f.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>73</sup> Suzuki, *Nagatachō no antō* 8, 236f.

<sup>74</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and Japanese Security," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1996), 92.

<sup>75</sup> Ishihara, *Kantei 2668 nichi*, 52. It should be noted that at this stage such a political heavyweight as Ozawa Ichirō argued that if sanctions and/or naval blockade would have an effect on North Korea, they should be used. Revealed by former Deputy Foreign Minister Yanai Shunji in *90 nendai no shōgen: Gaikō gekihen: Motogaimushō jimujiikan Yanai Shunji* [Winning the 1990s: Violent change: Former Deputy Foreign Minister Yanai Shunji], ed. Iokibe Makoto, Itō Motoshige, Yakushiji Katsuyuki (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 2007), 147.

<sup>76</sup> Marcus Noland, "The (Non) Impact of UN Sanctions on North Korea," Peterson Institute for International Economics, *Working Paper* WP 08-12 (December 2008), 2f,

was relieved when former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's mediation resulted in a cooling off of the critical situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula. He succeeded in reaching an agreement with the DPRK's supreme leader Kim Il Sung and both signed the so-called Agreed Framework on October 25, 1994. This agreement aimed at freezing the DPRK's on-going nuclear activities. The United States and other countries promised to provide crude oil and two light-water nuclear reactors in return for the DPRK dismantling its nuclear program.<sup>77</sup> The downside for Japan of the Agreed Framework was revealed when it became known that Japan without having been consulted thoroughly was supposed to make a substantial contribution towards the construction of two proliferation-proof light-water nuclear reactors.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the DPRK's violent and aggressive rhetoric paid off, and Japan was saved from the agonizing choice between participating in sanctions and having to abstain from siding with the United States, when the U.S. shifted towards engagement with the DPRK.<sup>79</sup> Japan's reluctance to join the U.S. in a tangible way, despite the two being parties to a mutual security treaty, showed the need for reinvigorating their alliance. The problem was that Japan had no answer to what it could provide when the U.S. government requested logistical support, demonstrating the inability of the Japan–U.S. alliance to deal with regional contingencies such as the 1994 DPRK nuclear crisis. The need for such an assurance was probably seen as more urgent than before by the Americans when, at the height of the DPRK nuclear crisis, Murayama Tomiichi, the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), formerly the JSP, was elected prime minister in June 1994. Murayama was the head of an unlikely coalition government formed by the two arch rivals of postwar politics, the LDP and the SDPJ (joined by the small Shintō Sakigake party) but he was also the leader of a party with solid credentials as an ardent opponent to the Japan–U.S. security treaty. The possibility that Japan would become an unreliable partner and scrap the treaty became a

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<http://www.iie.com/publications/wp/wp08-12.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Yo Taik Song, *US–DPRK Agreed Framework and Implementation* (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1998).

<sup>78</sup> Mark E. Manyin, "Japan–North Korea Relations: Selected Issues," *CRS Report for Congress* (November 26, 2003), 2f, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/27531.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions towards North Korea: Domestic Coalitions and International Systemic Pressures," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (Fall 2006), 461.

real possibility in the eyes of the U.S. government with Murayama's elevation to the top spot. He was a newcomer to top-level politics with be diplomacy and national security his Achilles' heel.<sup>80</sup> However, in an intriguing volte-face, Murayama threw away all his party's fundamental ideas without consulting the other party leaders and adopted, basically, policies that had been pursued by the LDP. In an interview he defended his actions and said that matters that had been dire to his party hitherto had to be thrown away; the reality after the end of the Cold War and popular will made it necessary for politicians to show resolve.<sup>81</sup> The ground for whatever alarmist thoughts that floated in U.S. leading circles and among the Japanese were removed the following year, when Japan and the United States signed a revision of Japan's National Defense Program Outline (NDPO).<sup>82</sup>

The Murayama cabinet was lackluster and Murayama himself was seen by many as one of Japan's least impressive postwar premiers. The Murayama years saw a deepening of Japan's involvement in the great-power politics around the Korean Peninsula with Japan pledging to cover approximately 20 percent of the cost of the construction of two light-water reactors in the DPRK that the Agreed Framework entailed.<sup>83</sup> Murayama's party had maintained close ties with the DPRK since 1963. True to his party's traditional Korea policy, one also saw efforts to improve relations with the DPRK such as a shipment of 500,000 tons of rice to the DPRK for humanitarian reasons after severe flooding. At the invitation of the North Korean KWP, a joint delegation of the ruling coalition parties headed by Watanabe Michio, a former deputy prime minister and long-time contender for the prime ministership, went to Pyongyang in March 1995 and signed an agreement with the KWP that no preconditions would be set for resuming the normalization talks. A new realism was demonstrated by the DPRK in that the need to solve outstanding problems related to the past was mentioned but postwar devel-

<sup>80</sup> Shinomiya Yoshiyuki, *Shomin shushō Murayama Tomiichi* [Murayama Tomiichi, the people's prime minister] (Tokyo: Tairyūsha, 1994), 217.

<sup>81</sup> Okano Kaoru, "Murayama Tomiichi kō: Shakaitō shushōron no ochi to shiketsu" [Thoughts on Murayama Tomiichi: Errors and hemostasis of the discussion on the JSP premier], in *Murayama seiken to demokurashii no kiki: Rinshō seijigakuteki bunseki* [The Murayama government and the crisis of democracy: A clinical political analysis], ed. Okano Kaoru and Fujimoto Kazumi (Tokyo: Tōshindō, 2000), 13.

<sup>82</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Security Agenda: Military, Economic & Environmental Dimensions* (Boulder, Colo. and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 176f.

<sup>83</sup> Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 121f.

opments were not brought up, removing the element that had been a key reason why the achievements of the Kanemaru delegation had gone down the drain.<sup>84</sup>

After having set sail to this preparatory work that resembled efforts in 1990, Murayama hinted, in his policy speech in September 1995, at his intention to seek the normalization of relations with the DPRK. He declared that Japan “will deal with the issue of the normalization talks with North Korea in close contact with the Republic of Korea and other countries concerned, taking into consideration the aspect of contributing to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>85</sup> Murayama was to experience that Japan was not free to act on its own, however. He held discussions with South Korea’s President Kim Young-sam who expressed strong concern. Nevertheless, according to Murayama’s memoirs, he got Kim’s understanding that it was “unnatural” [*fushizen*] that Japan and the DPRK did not have diplomatic relations.<sup>86</sup>

Murayama’s good-will gestures vis-à-vis the DPRK did not result in any breakthrough, however. When his successor Hashimoto Ryūtarō in November 1997 dispatched a delegation to Pyongyang formed by the same parties as in 1995 and headed by one of the heavyweights of the ruling LDP, Mori Yoshirō, results were somewhat more promising in that the KWP promised to investigate the issue of missing persons. The final result was nil, however, when the DPRK reported the result of the investigation in June the next year, bringing an end to the Japan–DPRK negotiations.<sup>87</sup> What complicated the situation for Japan was that the Clinton administration acted in a way that arose concerns in Japan. A proposal of four-party talks between the United States, the ROK, the DPRK and China to give the South–North Korean dialogue a kick start had been launched as a result of a meeting between President Bill Clinton and South Korean President Kim Young-sam. Not being a party to these talks was alarming to Japan but as Tokyo

<sup>84</sup> Takesada Hideshi, *Bōeichō kyōkan no Kitachōsen shinsō bunseki* [An in-depth analysis of North Korea by a Japanese Defense Agency scholar] (Tokyo: KK Bestsellers, 1998), 295.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Policy Speech by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama to the 134th Session of the Diet,” September 29, 1995, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/archive\\_2/diet.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/archive_2/diet.html)

<sup>86</sup> *Murayama Tomiichi ga kataru “temmei” no 561 nichi* [Murayama Tomiichi talks about 561 days of “fate”] (Tokyo: KK Bestsellers, 1996), 108–11.

<sup>87</sup> Nonaka Hiromu, *Nonaka Hiromu zenkoroku rōhei wa shinazu* [The complete memoirs of Nonaka Hiromu: Old soldiers never die] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2003), 298–303.



was sensitive to Seoul's concerns over possible Japanese interference, Tokyo could do no more than officially support the talks.<sup>88</sup> Eager to secure its own place at the negotiating table with the DPRK, the Japanese government initiated preparations for a new round of talks, only to encounter warnings in January 1997 from Kim Young-sam that Japanese talks with the DPRK might complicate the four-party talks, a comment that made Prime Minister Hashimoto back down.<sup>89</sup>

Whatever ambitions the Japanese government might have had were discarded with a series of events in 1998 that were alarming to Japan. The Japanese government presented in April 1998 a defense proposal to the Diet that was intended to rectify what had proved to be missing in 1994. Two of the purposes of the bill was to ensure safety in situations in areas surrounding Japan, which defined the rear-area support offered to U.S. forces, as well as to make it possible for Japan to provide logistical support for contingencies in "areas surrounding Japan that have an important influence on Japan's peace and security."<sup>90</sup>

DPRK upped the stakes in August 1998, when it launched a Taepodong-1 ballistic missile that traversed northern Japan before falling into the Pacific Ocean. It has been called "a brazen act that shook the Japanese out of their remaining complacency about North Korea the way Sputnik shook the United States in 1957."<sup>91</sup> The Japanese government's response was immediate. It stated that the launching was a "very dangerous act" that "could not be tolerated" and announced that it would suspend its signing of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) funding agreements, stop food aid and normalization talks and cancel charter flights between Japan and the DPRK.<sup>92</sup> On October 21 the Japanese government announced that it did not want to give the DPRK an excuse to resume nuclear weapons development by causing the collapse of the KEDO, the most realistic and effective framework for preventing the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons, and would therefore reopen cooperation in KEDO.<sup>93</sup> A declaration

<sup>88</sup> Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 123.

<sup>89</sup> Fouse, "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy," 143.

<sup>90</sup> Hughes, *Japan's Security Agenda*, 177ff.

<sup>91</sup> Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 22.

<sup>92</sup> Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions towards North Korea," 461.

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Diplomatic Bluebook 1999*, Chapter 1: General Overview, B. Major Events, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1999/index.html>



was also issued with the ROK in which the two countries pledged increased security cooperation, and Japan decided to start a program to acquire spy satellites to acquire an independent source of intelligence, rather than relying on the United States.<sup>94</sup> Japan's distress was shown also in its verbal policy. In March 1999, Defense Agency Director General Norota Hōsei told a Diet defense panel that if Japan felt a missile attack on Japan was imminent it had the right to make preemptive military strikes.<sup>95</sup> Words led to action when Japan extended the range of its fighter planes so that it would have the capability to directly attack military bases in the DPRK.<sup>96</sup>

Concurrently with the outburst of rhetoric, moves to improve Japan's relations with the DPRK were also taken. In November 1999, Japan partially lifted its sanctions, including the ban on charter flights and restrictions on unofficial contact with the DPRK authorities that were imposed after the Taepodong-1 launch. The following month a non-partisan delegation from Japan's seven major parties and a representative from Japan's Communist Party led by former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi visited Pyongyang. He carried a letter from Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō to the DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il expressing hope for improved relations. A finesse of the letter was that it was signed by Obuchi not in his capacity as prime minister but as the head of the ruling LDP, a method used also by Prime Minister Kaifu in his letter to Kim Il Sung. The delegation was dispatched in the hope that it would be possible to clear the way for formal normalization negotiations to resume. After the visit, Japan lifted the remaining sanctions, including on food aid.<sup>97</sup>

After the Murayama delegation's visit, new talks between Japan and the DPRK took place in April, in August, and October 2000, respectively. Beijing was chosen as one of the meeting places. This can be seen as recognition of the key role played by China to further contacts between Japan and the DPRK. The issues raised by the two parties at the ninth round of normalization talks indicated what were top priority on their agendas. Japan brought up the DPRK's missile and nuclear development programs, the abduction

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<sup>94</sup> Tsuyoshi Sunohara, "The Anatomy of Japan's Shifting Security Orientation," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2010), 43.

<sup>95</sup> Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World*, 44.

<sup>96</sup> Hajime Izumi, "Pyongyang Grasps New Realities," *Japan Quarterly* (April–June 2000), 14; as quoted in Fouse, "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy," 145.

<sup>97</sup> Cha, "Japan's Engagement Dilemmas with North Korea," 551.

issue, spy ships and drug trafficking, while the DPRK demanded a written, legally binding apology backed by reparations as well as an assurance of the legal status of pro-Pyongyang Koreans living in Japan.<sup>98</sup> Some progress was recorded at the tenth round, when the DPRK accepted to consider Japan's proposal to provide "economic assistance" rather than "reparations" for past wrongs committed during the period of Japan's colonial rule of Korea as well as declared that it would continue the search for "missing Japanese."<sup>99</sup>

The positive tone that had been noted at the tenth round of talks continued in the preparation for the eleventh round in a way that demonstrated how deeply the ROK was involved, when Prime Minister Obuchi's successor Mori Yoshirō acted on the advice from South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and in a letter to Kim Jong Il proposed a summit meeting between Japan and the DPRK.<sup>100</sup> Japan also decided to once again donate 500,000 tons of rice.<sup>101</sup> This became one of the rather rare cases when Japan has seen fit to try to better the food security situation in the DPRK, where flooding and other natural catastrophes have damaged harvests and resulted in shortage of food. Furthermore, acting on Pyongyang's willingness that had been demonstrated at the previous round, Japan offered an "economic aid" package amounting to US\$9 billion (60 percent in grant aid and 40 percent in loans). The rationale for this package was to obtain moderation of the missile threat and a satisfactory resolution to the abduction issue from the DPRK and not to pay reparations for the annexation period.

Japan's offer was to take a chance but it did not work. To disregard the demand for an apology was clearly a miscalculation and led to a volte-face from the DPRK, which backed down from the constructive stance it had demonstrated during the previous round and returned to its earlier demand for "reparations" tied to an apology, rejecting the idea of "economic assistance." The mood at the negotiation table was not made better when the DPRK delegation dismissed Japan's demands for addressing the issues

<sup>98</sup> Fouse, "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy," 146.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>100</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Japan-Korea Relations: Ending 2000 with a Whimper, Not a Bang," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (January 2001), [http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/0004qjapan\\_korea.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/0004qjapan_korea.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

of missile threats and abductions. On the issue of abductions, Pyongyang demanded it to be discussed separately from the normalization issue.<sup>102</sup>

Japan's offer is likely to have been a miscalculation based on the impression that quick results could be reached given the DPRK's stark need for aid, especially food aid, combined with its clear interest in hoisting in the considerable amount of money that Japan was prepared to offer. Japan's US\$9 billion package was huge in comparison to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the impoverished DPRK, which was estimated to amount to US\$10 billion in 2002.<sup>103</sup> The offer was to grossly underestimate the national pride of the North Koreans, however. As a state that had been founded barely half a century before, nationalistic sentiments were running high and the population had been solidly educated in anti-Japanese feelings. Not offering an apology was to severely hurt these nationalistic sentiments and indicated that Japan saw it possible to treat the DPRK differently than China. Japan and China normalized relations in 1972, seven years after Japan's reconciliation with the ROK. A prerequisite for China accepting to normalize was that Japan apologized and in the Joint Statement issued on the occasion of Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei's visit to Beijing in 1972, this was done in a way that that China accepted.<sup>104</sup> Behind Japan's unwillingness to apologize formally to the DPRK might be considerations of the normalization deal that had been struck with the ROK in 1965, when no formal apology from Japan was extended, only Foreign Minister Shiina's comments on the airport when he arrived to finalize normalization negotiations. To formally issue an apology to the DPRK would be to go further than what had to be done in the negotiations with the South, which could result in it taking action that could be detrimental to Japanese interests. But it may also have been the

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<sup>102</sup> Hong Nack Kim and Jack L. Hammersmith, "Japanese–North Korean Relations in the Post-Kim Il Sung Era," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter 2000), 615–16.

<sup>103</sup> CIA, *World Factbook 2002*, quoted in Manyin, "Japan–North Korea Relations," 9–10.

<sup>104</sup> Japan's customary problems in apologizing in a way that its counterpart accepts showed up in Tanaka's use of *gomeiwaku o kakeshita*, that is, "caused trouble." This wording was upsetting to his Chinese hosts who, however, accepted his excuse that he had "meant to express his deep apology by the term as it is used in Japanese." In the Joint Statement, a phrase was used that the Chinese leaders found acceptable. See Caroline Rose, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the past, looking to the future?* (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2005), 49. But once again Japan's problems of handling the burden of history was demonstrated in that the word *hansei* is, as noted above, is ambiguous. The important point was, however, that China's political leadership in 1972, on behalf of China, accepted Japan's apology.

case that Japan expected to be able to treat the impoverished DPRK differently from China, which was a great power, in the belief that the huge bait Japan dangled before the DPRK – “economic cooperation” amounting to several billion dollars – would enable Japan to strike a deal that would resemble the agreements reached with Southeast Asian countries in the 1950s and the ROK in the 1960s, all small powers, that were advantageous for Japan.

Japan’s seeming rush for quick results may also have been influenced by U.S. actions. An important consideration in postwar Japanese foreign policy is the perceived risk of being abandoned by the United States. No one active in Japanese politics forgets the fate of Satō Eisaku, the staunch defender of the U.S. policy of isolating China, who was mercilessly left to the wolves in 1971, when President Richard Nixon made a 180 degree change of the China policy of the United States without informing the Japanese prime minister in advance, as a result of which Satō later had to leave office in disgrace.<sup>105</sup>

Behind some of Tokyo’s worries was the fear that President Clinton would move abruptly to normalize relations with the DPRK prior to the end of his second term.<sup>106</sup> Immediately before the eleventh round of normalization negotiations, apprehension rouse in Japan when the United States engaged in high-level talks with Pyongyang that made Japan fear that the U.S. was considering the normalization option, when Vice Marshall Jo Myong Rok visited Washington, a visit that was followed up later the same month with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright going to Pyongyang. The sheer possibility that the United States could be considering reaching an agreement with the DPRK on the long-range missile program, and even moving on to normalize relations, was upsetting to Japan. “In Tokyo, suspicions were growing that the United States and the DPRK might reach an agreement on the long-range missile program and move to normalize relations, while leaving the short- and medium-range missile programs intact.”<sup>107</sup> The lesson from Japan’s normalization with China in 1972 was that a U.S. move towards normalization would result for Japan in a hasty agreement with the DPRK and undermine Japan’s ability to successfully negotiate on issues vital to it.

<sup>105</sup> Suda Minoru, *Satō seiken-2797 nichi, ge* [The 2797 days of the Satō government, latter part] (Tokyo: Gyōsei mondai kenkyūsho, 1983), 389ff.

<sup>106</sup> Samuel S. Kim, “North Korea and Northeast Asia in World Politics,” in *North Korea and Northeast Asia*, ed. Samuel S. Kim and Tai Hwan Lee (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 31.

<sup>107</sup> Fouse, “Japan’s Post-Cold War North Korea Policy,” 147.

## Prime Minister Koizumi Goes to Pyongyang

Probably the most eye-catching event in Japan's postwar dealings with the DPRK unfolded in 2002, when Koizumi Jun'ichirō became the first incumbent Japanese prime minister to visit the DPRK. In April 2001 he had replaced the lackluster Mori Yoshirō, who ended with his popularity at a historically low level. In contrast, Koizumi was a flamboyant politician who was a master at politics as theatre and unsurpassed in his ability to tame the press and other media. He was seen as a fresh face and enjoyed popularity at record levels. Behind his sensational visit to Pyongyang can be seen factors related both to his political persona, Japanese domestic politics and the prevailing international political situation.

It seems to be generally accepted that Koizumi's interest in foreign policy and defense was shallow before he became premier.<sup>108</sup> However, his fate became the same as that of other national leaders who professed no particular interest in foreign policy – once elevated into office, foreign policy becomes a key matter. Thus, as prime minister he had to involve himself. In spite of this, only a few foreign policy issues were directly handled by him and those that did come into his focus and had to be acted on were elevated onto his political agenda in a rather ad hoc fashion. The reason seems to be that Koizumi took decisions based on his own political ideas and judgment of the political situation.<sup>109</sup> In a survey of his foreign policy by *Yomiuri shimbun* journalists, his diplomacy is described as revolving around three bilateral relationships in need of acute attention at the highest level of decision-making – the DPRK, China and the United States.<sup>110</sup>

For any Japanese prime minister with ambitions to make it into Japan's historical annals, this feat can be attained by securing a foreign policy success. After normalization with China in the 1970s (opening of diplomatic relations, 1972, and signing of the treaty of friendship and cooperation,

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<sup>108</sup> Ōtake Hideo, *Koizumi Jun'ichirō popyurizumu no kenkyū: Sono senryaku to shuhō* [Research into the populism of Koizumi Jun'ichirō: Strategy and methods] (Tokyo: Tōyō keizai shimpōsha, 2006), 157.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>110</sup> *Yomiuri shimbun seijibu, Gaikō o kenka ni shita otoko: Koizumi gaikō 2000 nichi no shin-jitsu* [The man who turned foreign policy into a fight: The truth about the 2000 days of the Koizumi foreign policy] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2006).

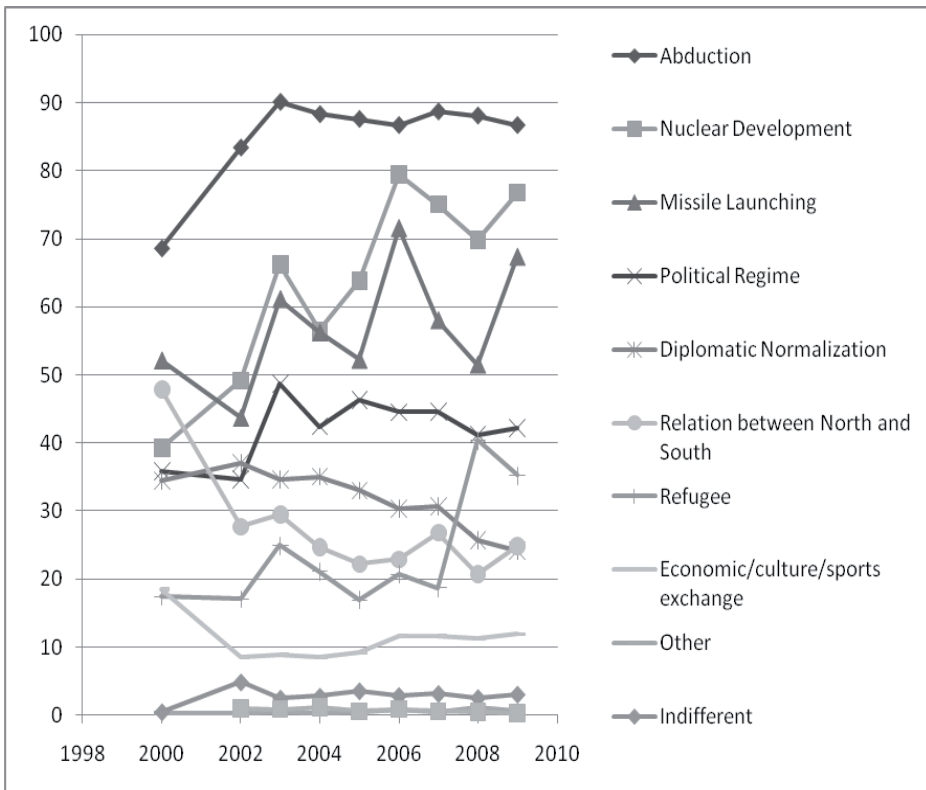
1978), two main feats remain for a prime minister who wants to enter the history books – signing a peace treaty with Russia and normalizing relations with the DPRK. With support rates topping 80 percent at the time of his appointment and consistently at a high level when in office, it made sense for Koizumi to try to take on one of them.

Either of the two was tricky. The road forward would be rocky, not least in the case of normalization with the DPRK. After half a century, the two countries lacked diplomatic relations and contacts and encounters were characterized by animosity and adversarial actions that aggravated as a result of the DPRK's belligerent rhetoric and ambitions to beef up its military capacity with nuclear weapons and missiles. From having been pursued solely on the party level with the JSP (SDPJ) the key actor and messenger on the Japanese side, relations had shunted on to governmental level, with the two countries now sending their representatives to the negotiating table. A number of issues pestered their limited contacts, however. In Japan, popular awareness of the DPRK was colored by a number of high profile and strongly negative issues. Given the fact that Japan's neighbor had demonstrated its missile capacity and was strongly suspected to be on its way of acquiring nuclear weapons, the top issue must be seen as surprising – the suspected abductions of Japanese citizens. It was an issue that towered high above all others when Koizumi came into power (see Fig. 1). Not even the intrusion on Japanese territorial waters and subsequent sinking by the Japan Coast Guard of a DPRK spy ship in December 20, 2001 – the first incident of Japanese hostile fire since World War II – made the Japanese alter their views of what constituted the most serious problem for the bilateral relations. Polls revealed that the *rachi mondai*, the abduction issue, was the greatest obstacle to normalization.

As always, Japan's actions were also influenced by the activities and policies of the ROK and the United States. After Kim Dae-jung had been elected president in 1998, Seoul switched to a policy of engaging the North, and Kim had even gone to Pyongyang for a summit meeting with Kim Jong Il in 2000. There was also a significant shift in U.S. policy towards the DPRK. The prospects of the U.S. coming to an agreement with the DPRK on the nuclear issue and thus abandoning Japan had evaporated with George W. Bush replacing Bill Clinton as U.S. president. Japan appreciated Bush's policy and was a strong supporter of U.S. policy to pressure the DPRK to abandon

its nuclear program. President Bush’s State of the Union address on January 29, 2002 in which he included the DPRK in the “axis of evil” reassured Japan that its great security underwriter stood by it. Bush’s speech must have annihilated any hopes that the DPRK could have nurtured of being able to come to terms with Washington. Consequently, Pyongyang did once again what it did when the Cold War was over and it was to a large extent left on its own by its two important supporters, China and the Soviet Union.

Figure 1. Japan–DPRK Issues According to Opinion Poll



Source: Norihiro Kubota, “The Structure of Impasse: The Complexity of Japan’s North Korean Issues,” Institute for Security and Development Policy, *Asia Paper* (October 2010), p. 13. Based on Cabinet Office, “Gaikō ni kansuru yoron chōsa” [Opinion polls on diplomacy], 2000–2009.



Pyongyang turned to cultivating Japan, floating the idea of a summit meeting as early as January 2001, soon after President Bush's inauguration.<sup>111</sup> In quick succession after Bush's speech, Pyongyang made a number of concessions to advance discussions with Japan. A journalist that had been detained for two years was released in February, in March the DPRK Red Cross announced that the investigation into Japanese "missing persons" would be resumed, and in April the DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il declared that the issue of missing persons could be a topic of future bilateral discussions.<sup>112</sup>

In fact, these concessions were part of negotiations with the DPRK that had been pursued in total secrecy from September 2001. Koizumi had entrusted them to Tanaka Hitoshi, the new director-general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of the foreign ministry. These negotiations were aimed at preparing for a bold but highly risky move. According to Koizumi, relations with a dictatorship like the DPRK were such that only a direct meeting between the leaders of the two countries could bring about a breakthrough.<sup>113</sup> A travel to the DPRK was politically risky because it went counter to Japan's hard-line stance that had been pursued as a response and in reaction to the DPRK's missile launches, spy ship intrusion into Japanese territorial waters and suspected efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. But Koizumi was willing to take risks on his own.<sup>114</sup> With the abduction issue towering above all other issues in the bilateral relationship, his aim was to make a breakthrough on this issue. To be able to do so, the issue had to be tackled decisively to overcome the diplomatic inflexibility resulting from the increasingly hostile public opinion in Japan towards dealings with the DPRK.<sup>115</sup> His travel to Pyongyang was not only done to make a breakthrough on the abduction issue but also in order to *kaza-ana o akeru*, "open an air hole."<sup>116</sup> This description was the same as Kanemaru had used in 1990 and demonstrated the continuity of Japan's DPRK policy.

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<sup>111</sup> Yoshihide Soeya, "Japanese Diplomacy and the North Korean Problem," *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2003), 55.

<sup>112</sup> Tanaka Hitoshi, *Gaikō no chikara* [The power of diplomacy] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbun shuppansha, 2009), ch. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Iijima Isao, *Jitsuryoku Koizumi gaikō* [Records of Koizumi diplomacy] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbun shuppansha, 2007), 105.

<sup>114</sup> Iokibe, "Japanese diplomacy after the Cold War," 203.

<sup>115</sup> Tanaka Hitoshi and Tahara Sōichirō, *Kokka to gaikō* [The nation and diplomacy] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2005), 27–29.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*



On August 30, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo announced that Koizumi was going to visit Pyongyang for a summit meeting with DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il.<sup>117</sup> Koizumi's decision was also conveyed to the United States, the ROK, China, and Russia when the visit had been set and sealed.<sup>118</sup> According to Charles Pritchard, U.S. Special Envoy to the DPRK at the time, Koizumi informed President Bush about his planned trip three weeks in advance, and Bush told him to go ahead but be cautious about promising too much.<sup>119</sup>

That a Japanese prime minister acted vis-à-vis the DPRK without consulting the U.S. government until very late brought back memories of events in 1989 in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, when Japan acted on its own in a way that was contrary to the way it used to act, when an important consideration always was to avoid involvement in high politics, which was the prerogative of the U.S. according to the solution for Japan's foreign policy that was agreed upon by the U.S. and Japan in the San Francisco peace process and that had guided Japanese policies since the early 1950s. That Koizumi kept the U.S. government in the dark about his plans until shortly before the summit meeting was not without precedence but still unusual. So far, it had been the habit of Japanese prime ministers to prioritize relations with the U.S. president and other high-ranking Americans.

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<sup>117</sup> Tanaka, *Ajia no naka no Nihon*, 275.

<sup>118</sup> Tanaka, *Gaikō no chikara*, 119–20.

<sup>119</sup> Quoted in International Crisis Group, "Japan and North Korea: Bones of Contention," *Asia Report* No. 100, June 27, 2005, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/north-east-asia/north-korea/100-japan-and-north-korea-bones-of-contention.aspx>

## Koizumi's Visit to Pyongyang

On September 17, 2002 Koizumi travelled to Pyongyang. On the plane, he reread the joint declaration that was to be issued as a result of the summit meeting. It was the result of long and arduous secret negotiations and when Koizumi reviewed the text on the way to Pyongyang, he had found it to be a very good document.<sup>120</sup> The prime minister was careful to stress the non-diplomatic nature of his visit. There was no welcoming ceremony at the airport and no national flags of the two countries were seen on the streets in Pyongyang.<sup>121</sup> To eliminate the diplomatic protocol as much as possible, he had ordered that the Japanese delegation bring its own rice balls, *onigiri*, and Japanese tea for lunch.<sup>122</sup> The visit was also short; the delegation left Tokyo in the morning and returned the same day. The atmosphere during the meetings with the North Koreans was tense and in his recollections Koizumi's secretary writes that he did not once see the prime minister smile during the day.<sup>123</sup> It was obvious that the gravity of the visit weighted on the prime minister's head.

The seriousness of the encounter that the Japanese would have with the Koreans was aggravated immediately. Only minutes before the summit meeting began, Japan's chief negotiator Tanaka Hitoshi was informed during a preparatory meeting that Pyongyang admitted to having abducted thirteen Japanese citizens but only five of them were alive. Koizumi was shocked when he received this information from Tanaka.

Koizumi and Kim met twice. A number of achievements resulted from the summit meeting. The puzzling circumstances surrounding the suspected abductions of Japanese citizens were clarified when Kim Jong Il admitted that 13 Japanese had been abducted between 1977 and 1982. He apologized for these activities by what he said were overzealous individuals in the DPRK's security services, and pledged that similar acts would not

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<sup>120</sup> Yoichi Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>121</sup> "DPRK, Japan End Summit with Progress in Solving Thorny Issues," *The People's Daily*, September 18, 2002, [http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200209/18/eng20020918\\_103409.shtml](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200209/18/eng20020918_103409.shtml)

<sup>122</sup> Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question*, 108.

<sup>123</sup> Iijima, *Jitsuryoku Koizumi gaikō*, 108f.

occur again. He also promised that the five abductees who still lived could return to Japan. Koizumi also obtained a commitment from Kim on two other important issues. The DPRK's self-imposed moratorium on missile launches would be extended beyond 2003, which seemed to eliminate what Japan saw as a direct threat to its national security. The DPRK would also "abide by all relevant international agreements in order to comprehensively resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula." Furthermore, Japan obtained a security assurance. In the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, the joint statement issued after the summit meeting, both sides confirmed that they would comply with international law and would not commit acts threatening the security of the other side.<sup>124</sup> According to Koizumi, "Kim acknowledged that 'certain military officers' had sent out ships into Japanese waters, and pledged that such actions would not occur again."<sup>125</sup>

Concessions were also made from the Japanese side. It was clarified that "[t]he Japanese side regards in a spirit of humility, the facts of history that Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of Korea through its colonial rule in the past, and expressed deep remorse and heartfelt apology." Immediately after this it is clarified that "[b]oth sides shared the recognition that, providing economic co-operation after the normalization by the Japanese side to the North Korea side... would be consistent with the spirit of this Declaration, and decided that they would sincerely discuss the specific scales and contents of the economic co-operation in the normalization talks." This light-handed touch in the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration on what had been the adamant demand that Japan should come up with a formal apology combined with compensation bears witness to being a compromise.

Coming after Takeshita's, Kaifu's and Miyazawa's apologies, Koizumi was not the first prime minister to apologize for Japan's activities in Korea during the annexation period but what he brought up while in Pyongyang and was written into the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration did not constitute a formal, legally binding apology to the DPRK. The Japanese

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<sup>124</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration," September 17, 2002, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html)

<sup>125</sup> "Koizumi Issues Statement After Historic Summit With North Korea's Kim Chong-il," NHK Television, September 17, 2002, as translated by FBIS, JPP20020917000132; quoted in Manyin, "Japan–North Korea Relations," 11.

view was that while Japan recognized the need for an apology, it was to be directed to the Korean people and could not be an apology to the DPRK government.<sup>126</sup> With the outcome of the summit meeting, Japan achieved this. Thus, Koizumi repeated Foreign Minister Shiina's bravado act in 1965, when he succeeded in satisfying the ROK's demand for an apology with his statement at the airport to such a degree that a formal apology did not have to be extended. There is a parallel between the 1965 and 2002 apologies in contents; the difference is that it was a foreign minister in 1965 and a prime minister in 2001 who conveyed the apology.

Koizumi was able to uphold Japan's policy of treating the South and the North equally. That Kim Jong Il accepted that Japan did not extend a formal apology is a clear indication that he was anxious to secure financial resources from Japan. In descriptions of the preparatory negotiations between Tanaka and his Korean counterpart "Mr X," Pyongyang's keen interest in what Japan was prepared to pay as compensation for the prewar period is striking.<sup>127</sup> The pressure from the DPRK representative on Tanaka Hitoshi, the Japanese representative in these negotiations, was so unyielding that it is aptly described as an obsession. It was well-known that Japan is prepared to normalize relations with the North on terms equal to those agreed upon with the South in 1965.<sup>128</sup> But Koizumi had instructed Tanaka not to specify any amount. The Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration shows the end result of the arduous negotiations that had taken place on the compensation that Japan was to contribute – "the specific scales and contents of the economic cooperation" were going to be decided in the normalization talks. Kim Jong Il accepted that Japan would not pay reparations but provide "economic cooperation." He also backed away from the DPRK's previous claim that Japan should pay compensation for the post-1945 period, despite the Kanemaru delegation having already agreed to it.

What was to be determined was the amount of money that the 1965 settlement would represent in present value. Although it is complicated to calculate, it is clear that it will be very large put in relation to the DPRK's GDP. Attempts to do so have resulted in sums ranging from US\$3.4 billion to US\$20 billion.<sup>129</sup> Regardless of whether the post-1945 period would be

<sup>126</sup> Tanaka, *Gaikō no chikara*, 111; Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question*, 27.

<sup>127</sup> Tanaka, *Gaikō no chikara*, ch. 3.

<sup>128</sup> Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World*, 47.

<sup>129</sup> For details, see Manyin, "Japan–North Korea Relations," 5f.

“compensated” for or not by Japan, already what Japan was known to be prepared to put on the table would be considerable for the impoverished DPRK.

In the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, the “economic cooperation” resembles what had been agreed upon between Japan and the ROK in 1965, since it comprises “grant aids, long-term loans with low interest rates and such assistances as humanitarian assistance through international organizations, and providing other loans and credits by such financial institutions as the Japan Bank for International Co-operation with a view to supporting private economic activities.”

It was a bold move by Koizumi to try to bring about a breakthrough with the DPRK considering that the issue of abductions was highly contagious. The likelihood that it would backfire was considerable. At the summit, both parties had had to compromise but also gained. That Koizumi was able to make Pyongyang accept terms similar to those agreed upon with Seoul in 1965 was a considerable feat for Japanese diplomacy.

Returning to Tokyo, Koizumi could list a number of important results: he had been able to obtain information about the abductions of Japanese citizens for which Kim Jong Il had apologized; DPRK had de facto accepted to do as the ROK did in 1965 and accept not reparations but “economic cooperation” without Koizumi having to specify the amount that Japan was to provide; he had secured a moratorium on missiles after 2003; and he had persuaded Pyongyang to pursue nuclear and missile issues within a multilateral framework. Koizumi’s personal diplomacy resulted in achievements that were noteworthy and – if successful – would have secured him a place in the annals of modern Japan; if he has such a place, which only history can tell, it is for other reasons.

What Koizumi achieved became a prime example of the result that can ensue from a statesman’s personal diplomacy. The favorable outcome was a result not least of the fact that Koizumi in his strategy to deal with Asian and African nations treated them on an equal footing, respecting their national pride regardless of the size and power of those nations.<sup>130</sup> But what transpired showed also how useful informal channels are. Such channels have been used occasionally since the days of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru in

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<sup>130</sup> Pointed out in Fumiko Halloran, rev. of Iijima, “Jitsuroku Koizumi gaikō,” NBR Book Review, June 15, 2008.

the early 1950s, when the matter dealt with has been highly sensitive and could be politically contagious.<sup>131</sup> The difference this time was that it was not a trusted personal friend of the prime minister or some businessman called in but a high-ranking foreign ministry official. In a way, what Koizumi did in his dealings with the DPRK was to repeat what Nakasone Yasuhiro did as new prime minister to boost relations with the ROK, already mentioned. He made a visit to Seoul in December 1982 that had been planned in secrecy and meant a breakthrough in the relations between these two countries. He appointed the business elder Sejima Ryūzō as his emissary to Seoul to prepare for his visit. On this occasion, the U.S. government was not informed beforehand and Nakasone's bait to lure the South Korean leaders was a sizeable economic package – in this case worth a hefty US\$4 billion.<sup>132</sup>

Koizumi himself could hoist in a tangible reward. His approval rating increased markedly in polls, from 44 percent in August 2002 to 67 percent after the summit. No less than 81 percent supported his diplomatic initiative according to a poll taken by the *Yomiuri shimbun*, and 58 percent supported the resumption of normalization talks.<sup>133</sup> But more striking was the negative reaction that unfolded among Japanese, when it was confirmed that Japanese had been kidnapped by the DPRK and that seven of the victims were said to be dead and one missing. A series of protests was unleashed in Japan that grew to a storm when five abductees returned to Japan in accordance with an agreement reached by Koizumi and Kim at the summit meeting.

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<sup>131</sup> “Nihon gaikō no hiseishiki channeru” [Informal channels in Japanese diplomacy], *Kokusai seiji*, Vol. 75 (October 1983); Quansheng Zhao, *Japanese Policymaking: The Politics behind Politics: Informal Mechanisms and the Making of China Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>132</sup> That the U.S. government was not informed by Tokyo did not mean that it was unaware of what Nakasone was up to, since the U.S. government was informed by the South Koreans, see Takahama, *Nakasone gaiseiron*, 78.

<sup>133</sup> Hong Nack Kim, “The Koizumi Government and the Politics of Normalizing Japanese–North Korean Relations,” *East-West Center Working Paper, Politics, Governance and Security Series*, No. 14 (February 2006), 8.

## The Victimization of Japan: A Turning Point in the History of Japanese–DPRK Relations

The summit meeting in Pyongyang on September 17, 2002, is, so far, the apex of postwar Japanese–DPRK interactions. Meeting face to face, the leaders of the two countries sealed an agreement that had been hammered out in long and arduous secret negotiations. Prime Minister Koizumi's bold move to institute a breakthrough succeeded in the sense that the summit meeting seemed to have resulted in a platform, the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, that both countries agreed to take as the stepping-stone for coming normalization negotiations. But the ink of the leaders' signatures on the Declaration had barely dried before the march on the path towards normalization derailed. What wrecked the endeavor towards normalization and reconciliation became acute the moment the North Koreans admitted that not only had they had kidnapped 13 Japanese citizens, seven of them were dead. It was news that shocked the members of the Japanese delegation but even more so public opinion in Japan. In Japanese eyes, the news that seven Japanese had perished was all the more serious because Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang had been pursued in order to solve the abduction issue.<sup>134</sup>

The exuberance felt in Japan after Koizumi's travel to Pyongyang did not last long. The anger felt by ordinary Japanese led to a public backlash. There had been a discrepancy between the U.S. and Japanese threat perceptions with Japan generally being more laid-back but the horror felt by many Japanese at the news of the abductions changed this. To the Japanese, the abductions became the human face of the North Korean threat.<sup>135</sup> There is, however, more than the abductions that proved decisive for making Koizumi's encounter with Kim in Pyongyang a turning point. The burden of history played in. As noted above, the legacy of Japan's aggression and imperialism that were played right up to the moment the Emperor declared that the unendurable had to be endured is lingering in the background. Postwar

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<sup>134</sup> Tanaka, *Gaikō no chikara*, 108.

<sup>135</sup> Maaïke Okano-Heijmans, "Japan as Spoiler in the Six-Party Talks: Single-Issue Politics and Economic Diplomacy Towards North Korea," [http://old.japanfocus.org/-Maaïke\\_Okano\\_Heijmans/2929](http://old.japanfocus.org/-Maaïke_Okano_Heijmans/2929)



Japan has endeavored to be a *heiwa kokka*, “a nation of peace,” and has acted accordingly in international affairs. The hideous crimes perpetrated by the forefathers of the present generation of Japanese is living memory both in Japan and in the countries that suffered. Of course, there are many Japanese who do not accept that their forefathers were responsible for causing human suffering of a horrendous scale during the pre-war and war years. Japan as a country and nation has done so, however. Apologies have been extended to other nations. In the 1950s relations with Southeast Asian countries were placed on an amicable basis with Japan paying reparations and relations with the ROK and China improved in the 1965 and 1972, respectively. Japan became an “ODA superpower” and Japanese aid benefited not least countries that had been ransacked before and during World War II. As noted above, the Japanese are aware that Japan has to pay for its past, also in the case of the DPRK. In Pyongyang Koizumi committed Japan to pay compensation, although it was labeled “economic cooperation,” as it had been termed in 1965 in the agreement reached with the ROK.

The crucial moment in Pyongyang when Kim told Koizumi that not only had overzealous members of the DPRK security service abducted Japanese citizens but many of them were dead became a turning point. The Japanese who had previously seen Japan as the perpetrator and Korea as the victim now saw themselves as victims of crimes perpetrated by the DPRK. What occurred resembles the mechanism by which the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the eyes of many Japanese turn them into victims and not perpetrators of war crimes; decades of Japanese aggression and imperialism were washed away by the atom bombings.<sup>136</sup> In the book in which Koizumi’s chief aide on the DPRK, Tanaka Hitoshi, documents the negotiations with the North Koreans both before and during the Pyongyang summit meeting, he does not hesitate to bring up this crucial point. He points out that the prevailing view among Japanese of what had proceeded changed radically at the news of the seven dead abductees. The view spread that Japan had been too meek towards Pyongyang and should be firm in its encounter with the North Koreans.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> See e.g. Alexander Bukh, “Japan’s History Textbooks Debate: National Identity in Narratives of Victimhood and Victimization,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 47, No. 5 (September/October 2007), 683–704.

<sup>137</sup> Tanaka, *Gaikō no chikara*, 217f.



The mental revulsion that many Japanese felt the moment they learnt of the death of abductees made them go from being the carriers of the legacy of Japanese aggression and imperialism to being victims of crimes committed by a ruthless adversary. Behind their strong reaction lingers a trait of the Japanese worldview. According to the leading international relations scholar Kōsaka Masataka, the Japanese attitude towards rank and norms is hierarchical so that “at any given time, there is a definable rank order between any two nations, whereby one is higher, the other lower. [...]. In the Meiji period the Japanese tended to classify the countries of the world as ‘highly civilized,’ ‘semideveloped,’ or ‘backward.’ In a later version the categories became ‘first-rate power,’ ‘second-rate power,’ and ‘third-rate power,’ and now they are ‘super-power,’ ‘middle-power,’ and ‘small-power.’ Although such classifications can be found everywhere, the Japanese seem to be more intensely conscious of them.” Kōsaka’s conclusion is that “[w]hatever its roots, the hierarchical concept of international society is still the basic framework within which Japanese classify their nation.”<sup>138</sup> Japan’s hierarchical thinking with the DPRK the underdog and Japan the topdog contributed to developments.

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<sup>138</sup> Masataka Kosaka, “The International Economic Policy of Japan,” in *The Foreign Policy of Modern Japan*, ed. Robert A. Scalapino (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977), 223.

## Developments After the Koizumi–Kim Summit

A key person responsible for how the issue was handled by the Japanese government after the Koizumi–Kim encounter was Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzō, a grandson to Kishi Nobusuke (prime minister 1957–60) and son of Abe Shintarō, a leading LDP politician and long-time contender for the post of prime minister. Elected to the Diet in 1993, Abe trailed relatively unnoticed for years as an ordinary rank-and-file member of this party's parliamentary caucus. It took nine years until he was entrusted with a post that was of some importance, as deputy chief cabinet secretary in Mori Yoshirō's second cabinet, a post that he kept in the next cabinet under Koizumi Jun'ichirō, whom he accompanied to Pyongyang. Abe met the sympathy of the Japanese general public, when it spread that he had urged Prime Minister Koizumi not to sign the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.<sup>139</sup> Abe was to emerge as a resolute hardliner never tiring of denouncing the DPRK and its abductions of Japanese citizens.<sup>140</sup> To him, it was outrageous that the North Koreans admitted their wrongdoing but did not apologize for it.<sup>141</sup> Abe's relentless attacks attracted followers. The rage felt by ordinary Japanese translated into public opinion and broke through when the Japanese government stopped the five abductees from going back to Pyongyang, although the agreement reached in the Koizumi–Kim meeting was that the abductees were to return after a short stay in Japan. In the encounter Koizumi had with Kim it had been agreed that the surviving abductees were to return to work out their long-term futures with their children.

From now on, the abduction issue came to dominate Japanese policy towards the DPRK, to the exclusion of all other issues. This was seen not least in the negotiations over normalization that took place as agreed upon at the summit meeting. The first point of the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration confirmed that normalization talks would be resumed in October

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<sup>139</sup> Shiota Ushio, *Abe Shinzō no rikiryō* [Abe Shinzo's abilities] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2006), 108.

<sup>140</sup> Abe Shinzō, *Utsukushii kuni e* [Towards a beautiful country] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2006), ch. 2.

<sup>141</sup> Abe Shinzō, "Nihon was nattoku shite inai" [Japan does not accept], *Voice* (December 2002), 40–49.

2002 and that both sides would make every possible effort for an early normalization. It was also agreed that the forthcoming negotiations would be based on the spirit and basic principles laid out in the Declaration. However, while two-day negotiations eventually began in Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur on October 29, 2002, they soon stalled. By this time, the abduction issue was towering over the negotiators and created an atmosphere of compact distrust that undid whatever ambitions the two parties may have had for reaching an agreement. Before the revelation that abductees had died, normalization had mainly been a matter of foreign policy in Japan. Following Kim Jong Il's admission that abductions had actually taken place, a storm of protests and waves of disgust built up in Japan at the revelation, spearheaded by right-wingers and support organizations of the families of the kidnapped. The latter proved a formidable force and able to wreck the attempt made by Prime Minister Koizumi to bring about normalization. The anti-North Korea activists turned this issue that had been primarily a matter of foreign policy into an issue that was predominantly domestic, albeit with repercussions on foreign policy. From now on, the Japanese government did not budge from that the top priority on the Japan–DPRK agenda was solving the abduction issue.

Koizumi's attempt to make normalization negotiations advance came to naught in the domestic political context following by a shrill concert of objections and accusations from right-wing politicians and organizations supporting the families of the kidnapped propagated by mainstream media. The situation became so tense that merely suggestion of concessions was political suicide in Japan. For others it was not a matter of risking political suicide only. Some of the politicians and members of the Japanese foreign ministry who had been responsible for carrying out diplomacy with Pyongyang received death threats from ultra-nationalist groups.<sup>142</sup>

When Koizumi met President George W. Bush on May 24, 2004, it became a reminder that Japan's policy was devised in a multilateral context. Koizumi stressed that Japan's strong stance was based on the international context and employed both "dialogue and pressure."<sup>143</sup> The final blow to Koizumi's effort to bring about a breakthrough was when news spread that

<sup>142</sup> Fouse, "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy," 150.

<sup>143</sup> Uchiyama Yū, *Koizumi seiken: "Patosu no shūsho" wa nani o kaeta no ka* [The Koizumi government: What has "the patosu prime minister" changed changed?] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2007), 153.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, after a visit to Pyongyang, told that the DPRK had acknowledged that they were working on an enriched uranium development program. This violated the 1994 Agreed Framework. The news broke on October 17 but already on October 6 the Japanese government had been informed by Kelly on his way back to Washington. This prompted the Japanese government to bring home the surviving abductees. They arrived in Japan on October 15. In Pyongyang, the Japanese delegation had agreed that the visit was to be temporary, but facing the outrage expressed in media at the return of the abductees, the Japanese government announced that it had decided that the five abductees would not return to Pyongyang. An important consideration for the Japanese government was to take away the need for the abductees to have to voice their will, considering the danger faced by family members in the DPRK not to be able to leave the country.<sup>144</sup> The decision led relations between Japan and the DPRK to deteriorate and, in fact, became the death toll for the march towards normalization that Koizumi had tried to open. Soon after his visit, government-to-government relations between Japan and the DPRK had become frosty. From now on, Japan's main instrument to try to come to grips with the DPRK became the imposition of sanctions. The "dialogue and pressure" approach that Koizumi endorsed at his meeting with President Bush turned into pressure only.

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<sup>144</sup> Tanaka and Tahara, *Kokka to gaikō*, 58ff.

## Japan's Evolving Sanctions Policy

North Korea was not the first country that had been targeted by Japanese sanctions. Since 1992, Japan has had a declared sanctions policy as part of its ODA policy. It was first outlined in March 1990, when Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki signaled a change in Japanese ODA policy. It was in reaction to the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 when the Chinese government clamped down on protesters. Japan introduced a policy that called for using aid in order to support peace, security, freedom, and democracy. In the ODA Charter that was adopted in June 1992, guidelines for distributing Japanese ODA were adopted. In making aid decisions, policy makers were to consider the situation in recipient states regarding: (1) trends in military expenditures; (2) development and production of weapons of mass destruction and missiles; (3) exports or imports of arms; and (4) democratization efforts, development of market-oriented economies, and status of human rights and freedom.<sup>145</sup>

After the adoption of the ODA Charter, the new policy was almost immediately applied. In a reaction to Mongolia's democratization and steps towards introducing market economy, the Japanese government announced an ODA grant and later dispatched specialists to assist Mongolia.<sup>146</sup> Similar steps were taken in case of the five Central Asian republics Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tadzhikistan, when they began to introduce economic reforms and democratization.<sup>147</sup> The newly announced policy was also applied in the case of Vietnam in an explicit support of its new restructuring policy.<sup>148</sup>

One trait of Japan's official sanctions policy is revealed above. Japan has much more often employed positive sanctions ("carrots") than negative sanctions ("sticks").<sup>149</sup> The implementation of Japan's sanctions policy made

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<sup>145</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan's ODA Charter," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1997/09.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Japan's ODA 1993* (Tokyo: Association for Promotion of International Co-operation, 1993), 34.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>149</sup> Inada Ju'ichi, "Jinken-minshuka to enjō seisaku: Nichibei hikakuron" [Human rights, democracy and aid policy: A comparison of Japan and the United States], *Kokusai*

it a mix of negative and positive sanctions.<sup>150</sup> From 1991 to 2002, for instance, negative aid sanctions on aid-receiving countries were used in 16 cases by Japan, positive aid sanctions in 15 cases.<sup>151</sup>

As can be noted from the above, when Japan began to impose sanctions on the DPRK, sanctions was not a novelty for Japanese foreign policy. In cases so far, sanctions had been used towards countries that were recipients of Japanese ODA and have been based on the ODA Charter. In the case of the DPRK they were implemented at variance with the traditional policy in the sense that Japan did not provide ODA to the DPRK.

The danger of being dragged into a conflict on the Korean Peninsula worried Japan. As a result, the Japanese government was long hesitant to use sanctions but, over time, Japan has unleashed a whole battery of sanctions towards the DPRK. As already noted, sanctions as an option was considered but not pursued by Japan during the 1993–94 nuclear crisis. A measure that was considered at that time was participation of the Japan Self-Defense Forces in a naval blockade, a proposal that was seen to risk a violent and possibly preemptive response from the DPRK and therefore abandoned. In the aftermath of the DPRK's withdrawal from the non-proliferation treaty and the firing of the Nodong-1 missile, Japan strongly supported multi-lateral peace-building efforts to security on the Korean peninsula. Consequently, Japan tried together with the United States to involve China in the resolution of the nuclear issue.<sup>152</sup>

Sanctions towards the DPRK were imposed by Japan after the 1998 launching of a Taepdong-1 ballistic missile over Japan. Most of the sanctions became rather short-lived. In November Japan reversed its previous stance after the U.S. government offered to take "a firmer stance against the further testing, production and export of ballistic missiles by the DPRK and to consult closely with Japan and South Korea on these issues."<sup>153</sup> What remained

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*mondai*, No. 422 (May 1995), 5; David Arase, "Japanese Policy toward Democracy and Human Rights in Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 10 (October 1993), 948.

<sup>150</sup> Fumitaka Furuoka, "Japan's Positive and Negative Aid Sanctions Policy Toward Asian Countries: Case Studies of Thailand and Indonesia," *MPRA Paper*, No. 6218 (December 11, 2007), <http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/6218/>

<sup>151</sup> Miko Oishi and Fumitaka Furuoka, "Can Japanese Aid Be An Effective Tool of Influence? Case Studies of Cambodia and Burma," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (2003), 891.

<sup>152</sup> Kintz, "Japan's foreign policy toward North Korea since 1990," 9.

<sup>153</sup> Yoichiro Sato, "US North Korea policy: the 'Japan factor'," in *North Korea Policy*:

of sanctions were abolished after the return of the Murayama delegation in 1999. The rather quick abolition of these sanctions can be said to be in line with the way Japan used to implement its sanctions policy and an expression for its general reluctance to apply negative sanctions.

In the aftermath of Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang, the abduction issue loomed large and the ruling LDP had made it a winning issue in the general elections in November 2003. To not be totally flattened by the ruling coalition, the main opposition party DPJ introduced in March 2003 a proposal in the Diet to prevent DPRK ships from calling at Japanese ports, but the ruling LDP did not give up its initiative and followed suit in April. In June the legislation was passed and Japanese customs, immigration, and the Japan Coast Guard expanded their safety inspections and searches for illicit contraband on DPRK cargo and passenger ships. As a result, trade between Japan and the DPRK reduced significantly. Between 2003 and 2008, Japan's export to the DPRK diminished from 10.6 billion yen to 790 million yen, its import from 20.1 billion yen to zero.<sup>154</sup> The most high-profile ship, the *Mangyongbong-92* – a ferry shuttling between Wonsong in North Korea and Niigata, and as the main direct link between the two countries often said to be North Korea's life-line – made only 10 port calls in 2003 compared with the previous 20–30 port calls per year.<sup>155</sup> This demonstrates how Japan employed what were not formally, but in reality, sanctions, when it enforced strict obedience of rules and regulations.

Historically, sanctions researchers have shown that unilateral sanctions have had a low success rate.<sup>156</sup> Japan's cautious stance and its predilection for positive, not negative sanctions, rest on the insight of the problems of implementing sanctions. It surfaced in August 2003, when the first round of the Six-Party Talks with the DPRK, the U.S., China, the ROK, Japan, and Russia as participating countries convened in Beijing. The aim was to come up with a peaceful resolution to the problems created by the DPRK nuclear program. The United States saw no use of offering concessions since the

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*Japan and the Great Powers*, ed. Linus Hagström and Marie Söderberg (London: Routledge, 2006), 82.

<sup>154</sup> Narushige Michishita, "Japan's Policy towards North Korea since 2002," *Journal for International & Strategic Studies*, No. 4 (Spring 2011), 68.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>156</sup> *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World*, ed. David Cortright and George A. Lopez (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995).



North Koreans might perceive this as a sign of weakness, but Japan proposed that fuel oil supplies be resumed as well as a support framework for dealing with the DPRK's energy needs. In return the DPRK was to abandon its nuclear weapons program, accept IAEA inspections, and stop both the export and deployment of ballistic missiles.<sup>157</sup> Concurrently with this development, however, the pressure for applying sanctions towards the DPRK gained traction in Japan. Instrumental for this development was Abe Shinzō, who had accompanied Koizumi to Pyongyang in his capacity of deputy chief cabinet secretary. Despite that he was a top governmental official, the hard-hitting anti-North Korea basher Abe had no problem to go public with his view in favor of sanctions, assuring the public that "time will work to our advantage," since the DPRK's economic difficulties would inevitably force it to surrender to the Japanese resolution.<sup>158</sup> In fact, Koizumi increasingly allowed Abe a free hand to pursue the abduction issue and the sanction legislations in his own style.<sup>159</sup>

The virtual failure of Koizumi's initiative that became apparent soon after the summit meeting in Pyongyang resulted in anti-North Korea sentiment running high in Japan. The abduction issue figured prominently in the campaign for the general election on November 9, 2003, with political candidates eagerly picking up the disgust of ordinary Japanese. Abe Shinzō turned out an election locomotive with his anti-North Korea rhetoric. The DPJ and the Komeito noted his success and quickly introduced plans for sanctions into their election platforms.<sup>160</sup> The DPJ activity in the abduction issue improved its credentials with voters and the party strengthened its position in the Diet, while the SDPJ that had supported the DPRK in the past performed so weakly in the election that its longtime leader Doi Takako had to resign. The party's lack of support was widely interpreted as a result of her identification with a party that had denied the abductions

<sup>157</sup> "Talking with North Korea: Japan to Go Its Own Way at 6-Nation Talks," *Asahi shimbun* online edition, August 26, 2003; as quoted in Fouse, "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy," 150.

<sup>158</sup> Abe Shinzō, "Tokushū Kitachōsen mondai no miezaru saizensen: Jikan wa wareware ni yūri ni hataraku" [Special Edition: The not-so-visible frontline of North Korean issues: Time will work to our advantage]," *Chūō kōron* (August 2003), 62.

<sup>159</sup> Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions Towards North Korea," 469.

<sup>160</sup> Ōtake, *Koizumi Jun'ichirō popyurizumu no kenkyū*, 226; Yomiuri shimbun seijibu, *Gaikō o kenka ni shita otoko*, 49–50.



for years.<sup>161</sup> Three weeks after the general election, the LDP introduced an amendment to Japan's Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law that would make it possible to unilaterally impose economic sanction of the DPRK, independent of the United Nations Security Council, and within three months it had become law.<sup>162</sup>

Despite the ever-mounting pressure on the government to take stern action, Prime Minister Koizumi once again demonstrated his stamina by making a second visit to Pyongyang on May 22, 2004. He went in order to negotiate the return to Japan of seven children of the five abductees' family members, who were living in the DPRK. His visit secured that five of abductees' seven children could go to Japan. Two children of one of the abductees, Soga Hitomi who had married the American Charles Jenkins who had defected to the DPRK from the ROK, were promised to meet their mother in a third country. It was also agreed that a joint investigation would look into the whereabouts of abductees. During Koizumi's visit, Kim Jong Il did not waver but said that the DPRK had to maintain a nuclear deterrent while also stating that his goal was to achieve a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, while Koizumi promised the DPRK 250,000 tons of food and US\$10 million worth of medical assistance and assured that Japan would not invoke economic sanctions as long as the DPRK observed the terms of the joint declaration from the first summit.<sup>163</sup>

The result from Koizumi's second visit to Pyongyang did not stop relations deteriorating. In Japan, the anger and furor over the abductions and perceived unwillingness from the DPRK to clarify facts about the fate of abductees increased disgust. According to a poll, 64 percent of the Japanese population believed that Koizumi had paid too high a price at the second summit, although they gave him high marks for bringing home the family members of the five surviving abductees.<sup>164</sup> Members of the families of

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<sup>161</sup> Tim Shorrock, "Japanese hawks soar on Korea fears," *Asia Times Online*, November 26, 2003, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/EK26Dh03.html>

<sup>162</sup> Richard J. Samuels, "Payback Time: Japan–North Korea Economic Relations," in *A New International Engagement Framework for North Korea? Contending Perspectives*, ed. Ahn Choong-yong, Nicholas Eberstadt, and Lee Young-sun (Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2004), 322f.

<sup>163</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "Press Conference by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi after the Japan–North Korea Meeting," May 22, 2004, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2004/05/22press\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2004/05/22press_e.html)

<sup>164</sup> Kim, "The Koizumi Government and the Politics of Normalizing Japanese–North

the abductees became celebrities. Influential politicians joined them and the opening for improving relations with “the close but distant neighbor” fizzled away.

The situation became critical at the end of 2004. When the alleged remains of one of the abductees, Yokota Megumi, were handed over to Japanese authorities by the DPRK, the Japanese government ordered a forensic investigation that indicated that the remains were not hers.<sup>165</sup> According to the influential journal *Nature*, the Japanese investigation was inconclusive from a purely scientific perspective and insufficient to prove that the remains did not belong to Megumi. In an atypical editorial for the journal the political usage of the DNA test by the Japanese government was criticized.<sup>166</sup> Since the materials had been destroyed during the examination, a renewed examination could not be performed and the embarrassing question mark for the Japanese government remains to this day.

The situation worsened in 2006. In March, the LDP increased the pressure on the government by submitting a bill that would force the government to impose economic sanctions if no improvements in the abduction issue were seen.<sup>167</sup> On July 5, seven Taepodong missiles were fired by the DPRK in a breach of the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, which includes a commitment to “maintain the moratorium on missile launching in and after 2003.” The Japanese government swiftly implemented unilateral sanctions, including the ban of the DPRK ferry *Mangyongbong-92* from entering Japanese harbors and DPRK nationals from entering Japan.<sup>168</sup> For China, the missiles were too much and it cautioned both publicly and privately Pyongyang not to proceed.<sup>169</sup> China’s stance opened for the UN Security Council to act and its Resolution 1695 was adopted on July 15. The resolution required member states to prevent the transfer and procurement of missile and missile-related items, materials, goods and technology to and from the DPRK as well as the transfer of any financial resources in rela-

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Korean Relations,” 25.

<sup>165</sup> Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question*, 60; Hirotaka Watanabe, “Impediments to Relations with Pyongyang,” *Japan Echo*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (February 2007), 9.

<sup>166</sup> “Editorial: Politics versus reality,” *Nature*, Vol. 434, No. 7031 (2005), 257.

<sup>167</sup> Hughes, “The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions towards North Korea,” 466.

<sup>168</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2007*, Chapter 2 (1), [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2007/pdf/pdfs/2\\_1.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2007/pdf/pdfs/2_1.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> Noland, “The (Non) Impact of UN Sanctions on North Korea,” 3.

tion to its missile or WMD programs.<sup>170</sup> Two months later, on September 19, Japan announced the imposition of economic sanctions that were similar to those that had been implemented by the U.S.<sup>171</sup>

In a peculiar twist of history, the missile firing paved the way for Japan's most noted North Korea basher, Abe Shinzō, to be elected prime minister on September 26, 2006.<sup>172</sup> His view was simple – for Japan, it was natural to prioritize the abductions above any other issue “since Japan cannot expect or rely on help from others, as for outsiders who have not experienced such tragedy, the kidnapping of one’s own citizens by a foreign country is nothing more than ‘somebody else’s problem’.”<sup>173</sup> Abe’s tough stance made this hitherto fairly unknown politician a political star. He was appointed secretary-general of the LDP within a year after he had accompanied Koizumi to Pyongyang and was then elevated to the government’s No. 2 as chief cabinet secretary in 2005. With Abe now at the helm, Japan’s sanctions towards the DPRK were the No. 1 issue for the government. As new prime minister, he did not mince his words in his policy speech to the Diet on September 29, 2006:

There can be no normalization of relations between Japan and North Korea unless the abduction issue is resolved. In order to advance comprehensive measures concerning the abduction issue, I have decided to establish the ‘Headquarters on the Abduction Issue’ chaired by myself, and to assign a secretariat solely dedicated to this Headquarters. Under the policy of dialogue and pressure, I will continue to strongly demand the return of all abductees assuming that they are all still alive. Regarding nuclear and missile issues, I will strive to seek resolution through the Six-Party Talks, while ensuring close coordination between Japan and the United States.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>170</sup> “Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s Missiles Launches, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1695 (2006),” UN Security Council, 5490th Meeting, July 15, 2006, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm>

<sup>171</sup> Karin Lee and Julia Choi, “North Korea: Unilateral and Multilateral Economic Sanctions and U.S. Department of Treasury Actions 1955–April 2009,” The National Committee on North Korea, Report, April 28, 2009, 45, available at: [http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/DPRK\\_Sanctions\\_Report\\_April\\_2009.doc/file\\_view](http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/DPRK_Sanctions_Report_April_2009.doc/file_view)

<sup>172</sup> Bert Edström, “The Success of a Successor: Abe Shinzo and Japan’s Foreign Policy,” Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, *Silk Road Paper* (May 2007), 45.

<sup>173</sup> Abe Shinzō and Sakurai Yoshiko, “Futatabi tatsu! Dare ga kono kuni wo mamoru no ka [Rising again! Who will protect this country?],” *Seiron* (September 2008), 52.

<sup>174</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, “Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo

In October the situation became alarming when Pyongyang announced its intention to test a nuclear device, which made China reiterate its warning to the DPRK not to proceed. Despite China's warning, Pyongyang went ahead. Making things worse in Chinese eyes must have been that the test was performed when Prime Minister Abe was en route from Beijing to Seoul on a face-mending trip to China and the ROK as Japan's newly appointed prime minister. Shortly after he landed in Seoul on his way from Beijing, information reached him of the DPRK's first nuclear test.<sup>175</sup> The test sent shock waves across Northeast Asia. A troublesome aspect to Tokyo was that the test demonstrated that not even China could sway the Pyongyang regime in regard to this issue, despite its alleged influence in Pyongyang. To China, the test was a slap in the face, since President Hu Jintao had expressed his concerns in talks with Abe during his visit to Beijing.<sup>176</sup> Beijing described the test as a "flagrant and brazen" violation of international opinion and shifted to support more robust sanctions towards the DPRK.<sup>177</sup> The prospect of a nuclear-armed neighbor that might force Japan reconsider its non-nuclear policies was alarming for China and threatened an arms race in which there would be only losers. A tangible effect of the nuclear test, therefore, was that it contributed to more amicable Japanese–Chinese relations.

Japan's zeal continued unabated. The hard-liner Abe took immediate action, backed by the fact that he had obtained support in his talks with Chinese leaders. They had "expressed their understanding of the high level of concerns that the Japanese people have" with regard to the abduction of Japanese citizens. He had also "gained the understanding of the Chinese side," when he explained Japan's position in regard to the abduction issue.<sup>178</sup> Already while in Seoul, he announced that the Japanese government "shall immediately embark on consideration of harsh measures."<sup>179</sup> Two days later

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Abe to the 165th Session of the Diet," September 29, 2006, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2006/09/29speech\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2006/09/29speech_e.html)

<sup>175</sup> Wakamiya Yoshibumi, *Wakai to nashonarizumu* [Reconciliation and nationalism] (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 2006), 12.

<sup>176</sup> Edström, *Success of a Successor*, 56.

<sup>177</sup> David E. Sanger, "North Koreans Say They Tested Nuclear Device," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/09/world/asia/09korea.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>178</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "Press Conference by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Following His Visit to China," October 8, 2006, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2006/10/08chinapress\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2006/10/08chinapress_e.html)

<sup>179</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "Press Conference by Prime Minister

new sanctions had been rushed through the Diet. They were based on the human rights bill that had passed the Diet in April 2006. All DPRK vessels were stopped from entering Japanese ports for six months and imports of all items from the DPRK to Japan were prohibited.

But it was not only Japan that hammered on the DPRK. In Seoul Abe had declared that he had instructed his government to “request the UN Security Council to immediately launch consultations with a view to taking firm action on North Korea’s nuclear test issue.” On October 14, 2006, UN Security Council Resolution 1718 was adopted condemning the nuclear test. The resolution put in place a battery of measures such as an embargo on exports of heavy weapons, dual-use items, and luxury goods to the DPRK, and the importation of heavy weapons systems from the DPRK.<sup>180</sup>

The nuclear test worried the U.S. government. At a new session of the Six-Party Talks, the United States altered its stance from defying any attempt to seriously engage with Pyongyang to taking steps to reengage with the DPRK, deciding to hold bilateral talks. While the other five parties agreed at the session to initially supply 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil as emergency energy assistance to the DPRK and up to 950,000 tons in the next phase of the DPRK’s denuclearization, Japan refused to provide any heavy fuel oil unless Pyongyang addressed the abduction issue.<sup>181</sup>

The zealous Abe did not last long as prime minister. After the clever move of a blitz visit to China and the ROK, his fortunes faltered. The abduction issue had been the top-most concern to Abe and the plank on which he had achieved political stardom. That Abe’s trump card did not guarantee enduring success was seen, when he began to stumble from one crisis to the next. After only one year in office he left.<sup>182</sup> He was replaced with Fukuda Yasuo, a consummate bureaucrat-type politician. Foreign policy was considered his strong hand. He declared that his government wanted to strengthen cooperation with the international community aimed at achieving the denucle-

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Shinzo Abe Following His Visit to the Republic of Korea,” October 9, 2006, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2006/10/09koreapress\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2006/10/09koreapress_e.html)

<sup>180</sup> “Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1718 (2006),” UN Security Council, 5551st Meeting, October 14, 2006, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8853.doc.htm>

<sup>181</sup> “Bush authorizes 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil aid to N. Korea,” *Breitbart*, September 28, 2007, [http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D8RUTJV83&show\\_article=1&cat=0](http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D8RUTJV83&show_article=1&cat=0)

<sup>182</sup> Bert Edström, “Farewell to Beautiful Japan: The Demise of Shinzo Abe,” *Institute for Security and Development Policy, Asia Paper* (September 2007), 31

arization of the DPRK, and would devote itself whole-heartedly to solving the abduction issue promptly.<sup>183</sup> Fukuda had played a key role in devising Prime Minister Koizumi's North Korea policy and some thought Fukuda's accession might herald an improvement in relations with the DPRK, but he stuck to the Abe-style policy and sanctions were renewed in October 2007 and April 2008.<sup>184</sup> Again, Japan refused to provide energy to the DPRK that it was expected to provide as part of an agreement reached at the Six-Party Talks according to which the DPRK would disable its 5 MW reactor, its reprocessing plant and nuclear fuel rod fabrication facility in Nyongbyon, and agree to provide a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear program.<sup>185</sup> Still, Fukuda's more forthcoming stance made a new round of the Japanese–DPRK bilateral talks possible. It concluded with a promise from Pyongyang to re-start investigations of the abduction of Japanese citizens. Pyongyang also agreed to discuss the issue of four members of the Japanese Red Army responsible for the 1970 hijacking of a jet who were believed to be in the DPRK, while Japan agreed to partially lift sanctions, including the ban on chartered flights and trips between the two countries.<sup>186</sup>

Fukuda did not last long as prime minister and was replaced by Asō Tarō on September 24, 2008. He had served as foreign minister in Abe's cabinet and it was therefore no surprise when sanctions were renewed in September. With Asō's pedigree as a grandson to Yoshida Shigeru – often called “the father of Japan's postwar foreign policy” – foreign policy was a central concern to him.<sup>187</sup> Whatever Asō's interest or intentions had been at the outset, the room for him to pursue his own foreign policy ideas was limited with a raging economic crisis and rapidly worsening economic conditions at home. In March 2009, the DPRK made preparations for a missile launch, which made Japan threaten to shoot down the missile and impose new

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<sup>183</sup> Bert Edström, “Struggle, Strife, and Stalemate: Yasuo Fukuda and Present-day Japanese Politics,” Institute for Security and Development Policy, *Asia Paper* (March 2008), 6.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>185</sup> Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military–Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966–2008* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 174.

<sup>186</sup> Blaine Harden, “N. Korea Agrees to Reexamine Abductions,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, June 14, 2008; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/13/AR2008061303285.html?hpid=moreheadlines>

<sup>187</sup> Bert Edström, “Problems and Perils of a Prime Minister: Aso Taro and Japan's Political Autumn,” Institute for Security and Development Policy, *Asia Paper* (February 2009), 45.



sanctions. Following the launch on April 5, Japan's sanctions were renewed on April 10, this time for a full year. Stricter reporting requirements on the amount of funds people in Japan could remit or transfer to the DPRK were also instituted by Japan.<sup>188</sup>

With Asō at the helm, not much happened regarding the abduction issue, bogged down as he was in the severe economic crisis, which also proved his undoing. He was forced to leave after less than a year in office after the general election on August 29, 2009 that saw the birth of a new coalition government of former opposition parties, led by the DPJ.

With the former opposition at the helm, it was business as usual as far as the abduction issue was concerned. The DPJ had been as eager as ever the LDP to be tough. In November 2008, the DPJ as the main opposition party drafted legislation that would ban all Japanese exports to the DPRK and all travel.<sup>189</sup> Prior to the 2009 election, the DPJ joined forces with two other opposition parties that they would "make every effort" to resolve the dispute, which has prevented Japan and the DPRK from normalizing diplomatic relations. The party wanted Japan to "stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and missiles in cooperation with the international community."<sup>190</sup>

A week before the election, the prime minister-to-be Hatoyama Yukio told that he would push for "dialogue and cooperation" with the DPRK should his party win.<sup>191</sup> The issues surrounding the DPRK was one of the headaches that awaited him as new prime minister. Hatoyama's grandfather Ichirō is considered one of Japan's great postwar prime ministers due to the fact that he was responsible for normalization of relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>192</sup> This led to speculation that Hatoyama Yukio as prime minister would take up his grandfather's foreign policy mantle, which included handling relations with Russia and, in an extension, also Russia's protégé, the DPRK. This speculation

<sup>188</sup> Lee and Choi, "North Korea: Unilateral and Multilateral Economic Sanctions and U.S. Department of Treasury Actions 1955–April 2009," 47.

<sup>189</sup> "DPJ to propose total ban of exports, travel to N. Korea," Kyodo News, November 2, 2008, <http://home.kyodo.co.jp/modules/fstStory/index.php?storyid=407541>

<sup>190</sup> Ko Hirano, "Hatoyama will be tested early on N. Korea issues," *The Japan Times*, September 14, 2009, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20090914a4.html>

<sup>191</sup> Kiyori Ueno, "DPJ Leader Hatoyama Would Seek Talks With N. Korea (Update1)," Bloomberg, August 23, 2009, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=a4NOMxCYj8mc>

<sup>192</sup> Donald C. Hellman, *Japan and East Asia: The New International Order* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 56.

seemed validated when Hatoyama brought back to prominence his grandfather's idea of *yūiai*, "fraternity," as an underpinning of political actions, also foreign policy.<sup>193</sup>

The speculation came to naught, however. Soon after Hatoyama had assumed the post of prime minister, he met representatives of the families of the abductees. The meeting confirmed the crucial role that the abduction issue played in domestic politics. Hatoyama promised to tackle the issue of Japanese citizens who had been abducted and believed to be still living in Japan's reclusive neighbor. The prime minister was quoted by the relatives as telling them that "I am going to tackle this issue in the belief that a new administration will be meaningless if we don't solve this."<sup>194</sup> Soon afterwards he met the South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and they agreed that the DPRK should not be given aid and that sanctions must remain in place until Pyongyang took concrete steps to dismantle its nuclear weapons.<sup>195</sup>

Hatoyama continued on this path during his time in office but did not remain very long. The two DPJ prime ministers who have come after him have been similarly unsuccessful. The abduction issue is as pervasively present in Japanese politics as during the Abe years. The abduction issue has turned out to be so ingrained in Japan's body politic that not even the fall from grace of the seemingly ever-ruling LDP resulted in any changes. In fact, the new ruling party, the DPJ, had been second to none to condemn the abductions. The need for condemnations in the prevailing political climate in Japan might have been seen to be especially pertinent to the party elders, since leading DPJ politicians had a record of having been promoters of better relations with the DPRK.

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<sup>193</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Address by H.E. Yukio Hatoyama Prime Minister of Japan at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations," September, 24, 2009, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/assembly2009/pm0924-2.html>

<sup>194</sup> "Hatoyama vows efforts to get back abduction victims," Breitbart, September 29, 2009, [http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9B0V79O0&show\\_article=1](http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9B0V79O0&show_article=1)

<sup>195</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "Joint Press Conference by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan and President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea," October 9, 2009, [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/200910/09kyoudou\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/200910/09kyoudou_e.html)



## Concluding Remarks

When Japan and the ROK brought an end to fourteen years of negotiations by agreeing on normalizing their relations in 1965, it was an agreement that aimed at putting to rest several decades of tortured relations. Japan had brutally dominated Korea from 1910 to 1945. Korea as a country ceased to exist with the 1910 annexation and Japan's policy in the following decades was aimed at obliterating Korea also as a nation. After Japan's defeat in 1945 and the creation of the two Koreas in 1948, the arduous path toward a Japanese reconciliation with the ROK could be concluded in 1965 in part because of the pressure that the United States applied on the two countries. The agreement reached left Japan's relations with the North in a limbo and it took 25 more years until the first instance of contacts at the governmental level was noted, when the Kanemaru delegation visited Pyongyang. The delegation had been given the task to solve the problem surrounding the *Dai 18 Fujisan maru*. The delegation found to its surprise that the DPRK government almost immediately proceeded to push for the establishment of diplomatic relations. The delegation leader Kanemaru Shin eagerly grabbed the opportunity. Kanemaru was a political fixer and used to run the show in domestic politics but he was a layman in diplomacy. His diplomatic inexperience fumbled the golden opportunity for a breakthrough.

The next instance of decisive proactive action seen from Japan was in 2002, when Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō as the first incumbent Japanese prime minister went to Pyongyang for a face-to-face meeting with the DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il. The problems pestering the Japan–DPRK relations were so pervasive that Koizumi had concluded that only an exercise of personal diplomacy from him as the national leader could bring about a breakthrough. In the sense of diplomacy, Koizumi's personal leadership resulted in the breakthrough that he had had in mind, when he decided to go to Pyongyang. The meeting outlined the agenda for the normalization negotiations that had been agreed upon. However, the negotiations on normalization derailed but it was not due to inept diplomacy as in 1990 but because of public opinion which revolted in disgust over the abduction of 13 Japanese citizens of whom at least seven were dead.

The admission of abductions was a revelation with momentous effect. The Japanese turned from seeing their country as perpetrator of aggression and maltreatment of the Korean people during the annexation period 1910–45. Kim Jong Il's revelation made Japan the victim. This victimization became crucial for subsequent developments. The relatively junior LDP politician Abe Shinzō offered the Japanese people his services as a hard-hitting North Korea basher and in the new mood prevailing in Japan, his anti-DPRK sermon was enthusiastically received and he made a quick political career that was crowned with the prime ministership. As prime minister his top priority was to solve the abduction issue and he chose one way to reach this goal, sanctions.

The approach that Abe was able to make national policy proved to be ineffective, however. It went counter to Japan's traditional approach to using sanctions as a foreign policy instrument. Japan has a tradition of applying sanctions cautiously and, furthermore, has a predilection for using positive rather than negative sanctions. Japan's historical experience makes it evident that if results are sought, positive rather than negative sanctions should be used or a mixture of positive and negative sanctions. In the case of the DPRK, when sanctions have been announced, only negative sanctions have been used and results have been lacking, as could have been predicted based on the results of comparative studies presented by sanctions researchers. A precondition for economic sanctions (sanctions have mostly, but not exclusively, been economic) to have effect is that their impact is often proportional to volume. Consequently, a basic problem for Japan in employing sanctions towards the DPRK has been that the impact of sanctions was bound to be limited given the bilateral trade. Trade volumes between Japan and the DPRK have never been large and sanctions contributed to make trade and economic relations shrink drastically, decreasing whatever impact sanctions could have. As a contrast, in the case of Myanmar, Japan has followed a totally different course since it first applied sanctions at the end of the 1980s with a mixture of both negative and positive sanctions (sticks and carrots) turned on and off over the years. It is telling that these measures have often had effect, but not always.<sup>196</sup> In the case of the DPRK, both positive and negative sanctions have been employed over time, but after

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<sup>196</sup> See, e.g., Bert Edström, "Japan and the Myanmar Conundrum," Institute for Security and Development Policy, *Asia Paper* (October 2009), 34–51.

2006 only negative sanctions have been applied. When no effects have been recorded, the recipe has been more of the same, with equally dismal result. It should be food for thought for the Japanese public and policy makers alike that the few cases when the DPRK has been forthcoming have been when what are in reality positive sanctions have been used by Japan, the most prominent cases being the results obtained by the Kanemaru delegation in 1990 and by Koizumi in 2002.

In a sense, Japanese decision-makers have been well aware of the ineffectiveness of the unilateral sanctions used towards the DPRK, but Japanese public opinion has been so enraged that there has been no room for the government taking other measures. The preferred solution was not to reconsider the ineffectual measures but to add even more. The basic philosophy seems to have been: the more the better, but the little impact sanctions have had on the DPRK behavior has added to the chagrin of sanctions supporters and (the few) hecklers alike. Japan's sanctions towards the DPRK have become yet another example in the long row of failed unilateral sanctions employed by a country towards another country. After an initial reluctance vindicating a well-established Japanese skepticism to (negative) sanctions, sanctions were applied but gave way to the insight that only actions taken in concert with others would bring result. In parallel with unilateral action, Japan took part also in multilateral efforts and even tried to invigorate multilateral sanctions.

The outbursts of Japanese proactive policy that were seen with the Kanemaru delegation in 1990 and Koizumi's visit in 2002 evaporated quickly. The negotiations that Kanemaru pursued in Pyongyang in 1990 were so diplomatically inept that Japan's option of independent action went down the drain as a result. The attempt at independent action seen with Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang went bust with popular outrage in Japan over what was seen as the DPRK's reckless behavior. The mental revulsion that many Japanese felt made them go from being the carriers of the legacy of Japanese aggression and imperialism to being victims of crimes committed by a ruthless adversary. The victimization of Japan became a turning point in the relations of the two neighbors. Prime Minister Koizumi tried for a while to keep up diplomatic action as an option but with the abduction issue being top news day after day his effort was in vain. Quite soon after the summit meeting in Pyongyang, the abduction issue had developed into a stumble-block

for the normalization process. In foreign policy, the abduction issue became the tail that wagged the dog.

The rage against the DPRK was aggravated by Japan's hierarchical thinking. Japan's hierarchical thinking with the DPRK the underdog and Japan the topdog contributed to making Abe Shinzō with his anti-North Korean sermon attract followers. Here, Koizumi was his opposite, treating Asian and African nations on an equal footing and respecting their national pride regardless of their size and power. But as a politician whose position was based on public opinion support, Koizumi adjusted to the prevailing currents running totally against accommodation and in favor of punishing the North Koreans that Abe was the most prolific spokesman for.

It is often said that foreign policy and domestic policy are but two sides of the same coin but the abduction issue has demonstrated graphically the veracity of the saying that all foreign policy is domestic policy. While there were other issues vital for Japan to pursue, both bilaterally as well as well as multilaterally, the abduction issue has come to consummate not only all energy of Japan's endeavor to come to grips with the DPRK but also became a straitjacket for Japan's foreign policy. The rapid succession of prime ministers after Koizumi has not changed Japan's Abe-style non-compromising anti-DPRK stance. Not even the departure of the long-ruling LDP from the government and its replacement with a new government under the former opposition DPJ meant any difference. The DPJ prime ministers Hatoyama, Kan and Noda have been as bogged down in the abduction issue as their LDP predecessors.

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