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The Koizumi Government and the Politics of Normal- izing Japanese–North Korean Relations

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THE KOIZUMI GOVERNMENT AND THE POLITICS OF NORMALIZING JAPANESE-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS

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Introduction

The problem of normalizing diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been a major issue in the conduct of Japan's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Japan and North Korea have not maintained formal diplomatic ties throughout the postwar era despite geographic proximity, historical and cultural ties between the two countries. In fact, North Korea is the only country with which Japan has not established diplomatic relations since the end of World War II. The "abnormal" relationship between Tokyo and Pyongyang was created largely due to the Cold War, which placed them in the opposite sides of the bipolar system. Japan relied heavily on the U.S. for its national security under the U.S.-Japan security treaty and followed U.S. leadership closely in dealing with North Korea. Since the U.S. maintained a policy of containment against North Korea after the Korean War (1950-1953), while guaranteeing the security of South Korea, Japan also adopted a similar policy. In 1965, Japan normalized diplomatic relations with South Korea, while maintaining a policy of non-recognition toward North Korea. There was little official contact between the two nations except for limited unofficial contact and trade.

In the post-Cold War era, Japan attempted to modify its North Korea policy as the emerging new international order necessitated inevitable adjustments to its existing policy toward North Korea. First, as Moscow and Beijing established diplomatic ties not only with Pyongyang but also with Seoul in the post-Cold War era, Japan deemed the establishment of diplomatic ties with Pyongyang necessary to compete effectively with

other major powers in Korea. Second, Japan also believed that Japanese-North Korean rapprochement would contribute to the reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula and help promote peaceful coexistence between North and South Korea. Since the divided Korea served Japan's interest well in the postwar era, Japan did not want to see any abrupt change in Korea (e.g., the reunification of Korea, war, or the collapse of North Korea). Third, as Japan wanted to play a greater role commensurate to its economic power in the emerging new international order, Korea was a logical place where Japan can play such a role. Fourth, as North Korea began to undertake a number of unfriendly and provocative acts against Japan, such as the launching of Taepodong ballistic missile over Japan's airspace, North Korean "spy" ships' frequent intrusion into Japan's territorial waters, and abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents, it became necessary for Japan to deal with North Korea by establishing regular channels of diplomatic contact and communication.

On the basis of a joint declaration adopted by the leaders of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) in September 1990, Tokyo and Pyongyang held eight rounds of normalization talks between January 1991 and November 1992.ⁱ Little progress was made, however, inⁱⁱ resolving several important issues blocking the progress of normalization talks, such as the scope and nature of Japan's compensation to North Korea for the sufferings inflicted on Koreans during Japan's colonial rule, the alleged kidnapping of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents, and international inspection of Pyongyang's nuclear development program. The Tokyo-Pyongyang normalization talks were suspended from November 1992 to the spring of 2000. Although three additional rounds of talks were held from April to October 2000, these efforts ended without settling major bilateral issues: the question of liquidating the issues stemming from Japan's colonial rule over Korea (i.e., apologies and compensation) and the alleged abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea.ⁱⁱⁱ

Meanwhile, Japanese-North Korean relations were strained further due to North Korea's attempts to develop missile and nuclear weapons in the 1990s. Even though Pyongyang's nuclear program was frozen as a result of the signing of the Agreed Framework between the U.S. and North Korea in October 1994, Japan's suspicion about

Pyongyang's ambition to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD) persisted. In August 1998, Japan was shocked by Pyongyang's launching of a ballistic missile (i.e., Taepodong) which flew over Japanese airspace and fell into the Pacific Ocean. Japan was also disturbed by North Korean spy ships' frequent intrusion of Japan's territorial waters.^{iv} Furthermore, Japan was deeply troubled by the growing evidence (e.g., the report of the National Public Security Commission in 1997) that more than a dozen Japanese nationals had been abducted by North Korean agents, despite Pyongyang's denials.^v

It was against this background that the new LDP-led coalition government headed by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro was inaugurated in April 2001. Although the Koizumi government's top priority was focused more on domestic economic reforms than foreign affairs, Koizumi surprised many by taking the bold initiative to visit Pyongyang for a summit meeting with Kim Jong-Il twice from September 2002 to May 2004, arousing expectations for the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the Koizumi government's policy toward North Korea in general and its handling of the issue of normalizing bilateral diplomatic relations in particular from the time of the inauguration of the Koizumi government in April 2001 to the present. It is a major contention of this paper that in spite of Prime Minister Koizumi's desire to normalize diplomatic ties between Tokyo and Pyongyang, unless North Korea abandons its nuclear weapons program and satisfies Japan on the abduction issue, it is unlikely that Japan will normalize diplomatic ties with North Korea.

The First Koizumi-Kim Summit Meeting

The emergence of the Koizumi government on April 26, 2001 heralded the beginning of a more autonomous, nationalistic Japanese foreign policy, which seeks to enhance Japan's international role commensurate to its economic power. Unlike many of his predecessors who tended to be passive in dealing with controversial foreign policy issues partly because of the political dynamics of factionalism within the ruling LDP and

partly because of bureaucratic power and its role in the foreign policy-making process, Koizumi's political style was quite different. He defied the existing norm of balancing factional interests within the ruling party in appointing the cabinet members, because Koizumi's political power is based not so much on factional alignments within the LDP as on his enormous popularity with the rank and file of the LDP and Japanese voters at large (e.g., his popularity rate was 87% among Japanese voters after becoming the Prime Minister in April 2001).

By utilizing his enormous popularity with the rank and file of the ruling LDP, Koizumi exercised a strong top-down decision making power instead of following the conventional mode of consensus building among faction leaders. In making the decision to visit North Korea for a summit meeting with Kim Jong-Il, instead of going through the conventional consensus-building process, Koizumi adopted top-down decision-making with the assistance of a small group of bureaucrats and aides. Only a few handful players in the Prime Minister's official residence ("Shusho kantei") and the Foreign Ministry knew of Koizumi's secret plan for the Pyongyang summit with Kim Jong-Il. Besides Koizumi, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo, and Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Furukawa Sadajiro in the "Shusho kantei" and Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko, Vice Foreign Minister Takeuchi Yukio and few key bureaucrats including Tanaka Hitoshi (who handled direct negotiations with Pyongyang for Koizumi's first trip to Pyongyang) in the Foreign Ministry.^{vi} Not even Abe Shinzo, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, was aware of Koizumi's summit plan until it was announced on August 30, 2002.^{vii}

In the summer of 2001, when North Korea sent a feeler for the resumption of bilateral talks with Japan, Koizumi entrusted the task of exploring the resumption of bilateral normalization talks to Tanaka Hitoshi, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asia and Oceania Bureau, who began earnestly to engage in secret negotiations with his North Korean counterpart known simply as Mr. "X" (still shrouded in thick veil) from October 2001.^{viii} The main purpose of Tanaka's secret mission was to help "normalize diplomatic relations and bring about peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."^{ix} Since the task of normalizing relations with North Korea was regarded as "a top priority issue" for Japan's foreign policy, Tanaka worked closely with Prime Minister Koizumi and the Japanese Foreign Minister in carrying out the negotiations with his North Korean

counterpart.^x It was through the unofficial channel of contact with Pyongyang that Tanaka was able to arrange the first Koizumi-Kim Jong-Il summit meeting in Pyongyang in September 2002.

Through the secret channel of communication established between Tokyo and Pyongyang, Japan-DPRK relations began to show the signs of improvement in the spring of 2002. In February, a Japanese reporter detained by North Korea for two years was released unconditionally upon Japan's request conveyed through Tanaka.^{xi} In March, reversing its original decision, the North Korean Red Cross announced its decision to conduct a "serious investigation" into the "missing Japanese." At another round of Red Cross talks in Pyongyang in mid-August, North Koreans provided for the first time information concerning some "missing Japanese," even though none of the eleven abductees on the Tokyo's list was included. Meanwhile, North Korean officials told visiting Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in Pyongyang in July that they wished to open a dialogue with Japan and the U.S. "without any preconditions."^{xii} Shortly thereafter at the ASEAN Regional Forum meeting in Brunei in July 2002 Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko and her North Korean counterpart, Paek Nam-Sun, agreed to hold a bilateral working-level meeting in August 2002.

It was not until late August 2002 that significant progress was made for the resumption of the suspended Japanese-North Korean normalization talks. At the bilateral director-general level talks in Pyongyang, Tanaka Hitoshi and his North Korean counterpart, Ma Chol-Su, were able to lay down the basic framework for a Japan-North Korea summit meeting by hammering out a compromise on the two thorny issues obstructing diplomatic normalization between Tokyo and Pyongyang: (1) the scope and nature of Japan's compensation to North Korea; and (2) the abduction issue. First, reversing its previous position, Pyongyang indicated its willingness to accept Japan's economic aid instead of insisting on "reparations" on the compensation issue. Second, Pyongyang also hinted its willingness to provide information concerning the "missing" Japanese.^{xiii} In return, Japan expressed its willingness to resume normalization talks with Pyongyang. Tanaka also delivered Prime Minister Koizumi's message for Kim Jong-Il, promising to make serious efforts toward normalization.^{xiv} In reply, Kim expressed his gratitude to Koizumi. It was the first such exchange of messages between the two leaders.

Against this background, Japan announced on August 30, 2002, that Koizumi would visit North Korea on September 17 for a summit meeting with Kim Jong-Il. Apparently, Koizumi's decision reflected the Prime Minister's determination to normalize relations with North Korea, the only country with which Japan has not established diplomatic ties in the postwar era. Without normalizing diplomatic ties with North Korea, one of the few remaining issues stemming from Japan's defeat in World War II, Japan might not be able to compete effectively in Korea with other major powers such as China and Russia, which have established diplomatic ties with both North and South Korea. In addition, there was a strong feeling among influential leaders of the ruling LDP and Foreign Ministry officials that the collapse (or "hard landing") of North Korea would not benefit North Korea's neighbors including Japan, for such a contingency could create enormous economic, political and humanitarian problems for them.^{xv} In addition, there was need for Japan to utilize opportunity to pressure Pyongyang on the suspected abduction of Japanese nationals by Pyongyang and security issues, such as missiles and nuclear weapons, and North Korean spy ships' frequent intrusion into Japanese waters. A successful resolution of the North Korean problem would not only be a major achievement for the Koizumi government but also boost the sagging popularity of the Koizumi government which was losing popular support because of its inability to turn around Japan's persisting economic recession. For these reasons, Koizumi decided to take a bold initiative to take a historic visit to Pyongyang for a summit meeting with Kim Jong-Il. Skipping normal bilateral consultations with Washington, Japan notified the U.S. of Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang only three days before the announcement of the decision.

For the Kim Jong-Il regime, on the other hand, the settlement of the apology and compensation issues was clearly a top priority. North Korea was desperately in need of foreign economic assistance to cope with its deepening economic crisis. With its economy on the verge of collapse, it needed Japan's massive economic assistance in whatever form possible. This was why Pyongyang was indicating its willingness to make concessions on the compensation issue instead of insisting on "reparations." In addition, North Korea also wanted to enlist Japan's good will and influence in coping with the Bush administration's "hostile" policy toward North Korea. As the Bush administration

did not rule out a preemptive strike against a key member of the “axis of evil,” like North Korea, Pyongyang had to use the “Japan card” in its attempt to alleviate the U.S. enmity by requesting Japan to convey Pyongyang’s desire to improve relations with the U.S.^{xvi}

On September 17, 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi flew to Pyongyang for the historic summit with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-Il. At the meeting both sides gave ground on bilateral issues. Reversing Pyongyang’s position on the abduction issue, Kim Jong-Il acknowledged North Korea’s responsibility for abducting Japanese nationals and offered apology, pledging not to repeat such mistakes.^{xvii} According to North Korea, four of eleven Japanese nationals abducted by Pyongyang in the 1970s and 1980s were alive, but six others had died of illness or accidents. One had never entered North Korea. In addition, the North Korean side provided information concerning three additional Japanese abductees who had not been included in the Japanese list: two died, while one was still alive.^{xviii} Koizumi was clearly shocked by the unexpectedly high number of the dead abductees. In addition to protesting to Pyongyang’s cruel acts of abduction, Koizumi demanded that Pyongyang continue its investigation into the cases, return those who were alive and take necessary measures to prevent such activities in the future. Kim pledged not to engage in such an act again, while assuring Koizumi that Pyongyang had already punished those responsible.^{xix}

In the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration signed by Koizumi and Kim, the two leaders agreed to resume stalled bilateral normalization talks in October 2002.^{xx} Regarding Japan’s colonial rule, the Japanese side voiced “deep regrets and a heartfelt apology” for the suffering and damage inflicted on Koreans by Japan’s colonial rule. The two leaders agreed that Tokyo and Pyongyang should settle North Korea’s demand for compensation for suffering inflicted on Koreans during Japan’s colonial rule not through reparations but by economic cooperation involving Japanese grants and low-interest loans to North Korea. Regarding the nuclear weapons issue, Kim promised to comply with “all related international agreements.”^{xxi} In addition, Kim also promised to extend Pyongyang’s self-imposed moratorium on missile testing beyond 2003. Also, the two leaders confirmed the need to promote dialogue on security issues, including nuclear development and missiles. With respect to the outstanding issues relating to the “lives

and security of Japanese nationals,” or the abduction issue, the North Korean side pledged, “it would take appropriate measures so that these regrettable incidents” would “never happen again.”^{xxii} Although not stipulated in the joint declaration, Kim Jong-Il also promised to prevent the recurrence of North Korean spy ships’ intrusion into Japanese territorial waters.

Domestic Reactions to the Pyongyang Summit

The first Koizumi-Kim summit meeting clearly achieved more than many Japanese had expected. For the first time, Kim Jong-Il had confessed and apologized for abducting Japanese nationals, promising to prevent a recurrence. At the same time, the Japanese side was greatly encouraged by North Korea’s willingness to settle the compensation issue through economic cooperation rather than as “reparations” as Pyongyang had insisted in the past. As a result, the two major issues blocking the progress of normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang seemed to be close to resolution. By breaking the two major obstacles stalling normalization talks, the Pyongyang summit resuscitated the hope for the normalization of Japanese-North Korean diplomatic relations.

According to a public opinion poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Koizumi’s diplomatic initiative was supported by 81 percent of Japanese voters.^{xxiii} As for the resumption of normalization talks, 58 percent of the respondents supported it. However, according to another poll conducted by the *Mainichi Shimbun*, three-quarters of the respondents said Japan should not hurry to establish diplomatic ties with Pyongyang. The same poll also confirmed a dramatic rise in the popularity of Prime Minister Koizumi from 43 percent in August 2002 to 67 percent in the wake of the Pyongyang summit.^{xxiv}

Opposition parties were divided over the Pyongyang Declaration and also as to whether normalization talks should be resumed. The major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the Liberal Party (LP) were critical of the Pyongyang Declaration and suggested that the planned normalization talks should not be held until the abduction and nuclear issues were resolved. The left-wing parties such as the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ) and the Japan Communist Party (JCP) welcomed the declaration and

supported the resumption of the talks. They maintained that Tokyo and Pyongyang could discuss the outstanding issues at the negotiating tables.^{xxv}

Despite largely favorable reactions to Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang, Japanese public opinion was not wholly positive but contained dangers of a backlash, as many Japanese were shocked to learn that eight out of thirteen abductees died after being abducted to North Korea. There were angry reactions from the relatives of the abduction victims who resented Koizumi's "hasty" decision to resume normalization talks without securing adequate information concerning the circumstances surrounding the deaths of eight abductees or making necessary arrangements for the return of the surviving five abductees and their families to Japan. As the anger of the victims' relatives and the sensational reporting of the Japanese media on the abduction cases showed no sign of abating,^{xxvi} it became imperative for the Koizumi government to accommodate the demands of the victims' relatives and their supporters.

To placate the enraged public opinion, Japan dispatched an official delegation to collect further information concerning the fate of the Japanese abductees toward the end of September 2002. Pyongyang told the Japanese team that all eight had died from "illness and disasters" and were not the victims of foul play.^{xxvii} However, no credible explanation was given by North Korea to substantiate Pyongyang's claims. Japanese suspicions about the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the deceased abductees were deepened by Pyongyang's claim that Arimoto Keiko and Ishioka Toru, both kidnapped in Europe, died on the same day by anthracite coal poisoning, while the other six abductees died in highly questionable ways including traffic accidents, suicide, and heart attacks. Pyongyang also claimed that seven of eight graves (together with remains) had been washed away in massive floods. Furthermore, the same hospital issued death certificates to seven victims despite the North's claim that they died under diverse circumstances in several different provinces. As a result, relatives of the victims reacted angrily to what they branded as the details of a cruel hoax and more lies from the North Korean regime, refusing to believe the explanations offered by North Korea.^{xxviii} Under the circumstances, families of abductees and concerned Japanese demanded that Japan not to normalize relations with North Korea unless or until the kidnapping issue was resolved. According to a poll conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun*, 88% of respondents said

that they could not trust the results of Pyongyang's investigation.^{xxxix} Moreover, according to another poll conducted by the *Mainichi Shimbun*, the support for the resumption of normalization talks decreased from 70% in mid-September to 48% by early October.^{xxx}

The Koizumi government promised to continue further investigation into the abduction cases in order to discover the truth about the several abductees' deaths. At the same time, it had to work out an agreement for the early return to Japan of the five surviving abductees from North Korea as public opinion strongly demanded their immediate return. Through secret talks held between Tanaka Hitoshi and Ma Chol-Su, Tokyo was able to arrange for the five Japanese surviving abductees to return to Japan for a two-week visit, beginning October 15, 2002.^{xxxi} Apparently, North Korea decided to accept the Japanese request to show its good will toward the forthcoming normalization talks and to placate adverse Japanese public opinion.

Following the arrival of the five abductees in Japan, Koizumi declared that their homecoming visit constituted the first step toward the resolution of the abduction issue. However, there still remained many outstanding issues requiring resolution, such as the return of their family members from North Korea and a further probe into the cases of the other 10 abductees including the eight who were reportedly dead. Koizumi pledged that Japan would place top priority on dealing with the abduction issue in the future negotiations and promised that his government would help bring back the family members (e.g., children) of the returned abductees from North Korea to Japan.^{xxxii} Under the pressure from the families of the abductees,^{xxxiii} Tokyo decided to extend the stay of the five home-visiting abductees indefinitely. Immediately, North Korea protested to Japan for the violation of the original agreement on the abductees' home visit.

Meanwhile, in addition to the abduction issue, Pyongyang's clandestine uranium-based nuclear weapons program was shaping up as a major dispute in Japanese-North Korean relations in October 2002. The revelation came during U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and Pacific Affairs James Kelly's visit to Pyongyang in early October 2002. Coming barely a month after the signing of the "Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration," in which Kim Jong-Il pledged to abide by all international agreements relevant to the nuclear issue, the exposure of the Pyongyang's secret nuclear weapons program clearly undermined Japan's confidence in the trustworthiness of North

Korea.^{xxxiv} Such a development also embarrassed further the pro-Pyongyang left-wing elements in Japan. Already, Kim Jong-Il's acknowledgement of the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents embarrassed many pro-Pyongyang left-wingers and also undermined their credibility, for many left-wing politicians (e.g., Doi Takako, former chairperson of the SDP), intellectuals and others either toed the North Korean line on the abduction issue or attempted to defend Pyongyang's innocence in the abduction cases by questioning the accuracy and reliability of the Japanese police authorities' reports on the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents.^{xxxv} Under the circumstances, it became difficult for them to speak out for North Korea.

In a joint statement issued with the leaders of the U.S. and South Korea at the APEC meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, in late October, Koizumi called on North Korea "to dismantle" its nuclear weapons program and comply fully with its international commitments.^{xxxvi} Returning from the APEC meeting, Koizumi made clear that if North Korea would not comply with such a demand, Japan would neither normalize relations with Pyongyang nor offer economic assistance to the Communist regime.^{xxxvii}

At the 12th round of Japanese-North Korean normalization talks, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on October 29-30, 2002, there was little progress in ironing out differences between Tokyo and Pyongyang. Regarding Japan's demand for the settlement of the abduction related issues, North Korea rejected the demand, contending that the issue had already been resolved at the Pyongyang summit on September 17 when Kim Jong-Il offered an apology with a promise to prevent recurrence.^{xxxviii} As for Japan's demand for the return of the families of the five abductees at an early date, North Korea rejected it, accusing Japan of breaking its promise to return the five abductees to Pyongyang after a two-week home visit in Japan. It demanded the return of the five abductees in accordance with the original agreement. In response, Japan's chief delegate Ambassador Suzuki Katsunari denounced Pyongyang's "criminal act of kidnapping"^{xxxix} and requested Pyongyang to answer some 150 questions relating to the abduction issue.

Regarding Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program, Japan expressed grave concern over North Korea's nuclear weapons program, reminding Pyongyang of its international commitment and obligations and demanding Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program "in a prompt and verifiable manner."^{xl} However, North Korea rejected

the Japanese demand, saying that it would resolve the nuclear issue through negotiations with the U.S. as Washington's "hostile policy" toward North Korea was at the root of the nuclear program.^{xli}

In response to North Korea's insistence that Tokyo and Pyongyang should discuss economic cooperation as a priority issue, Japan made it clear that economic aid would come only in the aftermath of the normalization of Tokyo-Pyongyang diplomatic relations.^{xlii} In short, Japan and North Korea failed to make any significant progress in resolving the two major issues (i.e., the abduction and nuclear weapons disputes) during the 12th round of normalization talks. Although the two sides agreed tentatively to hold high-level bilateral talks on security issues, the meeting adjourned without agreeing on the next round of normalization talk.

In the aftermath of normalization talks at the Kuala Lumpur, it became evident that Japanese-North Korean relations were stalemated. Japan decided to allow the five Japanese abductees to stay in Japan for good, despite Pyongyang's warning that it would not proceed with further negotiations unless the abductees were returned to North Korea. Japan was equally determined to secure concessions from Pyongyang not only for the permanent stay of the five abductees in Japan but also for the return of their families left behind North Korea. In fact, Tokyo made it clear to Pyongyang that return of the abductees' families to Japan was a precondition of resuming the next round of normalization talks with North Korea.^{xliii} In addition to the abduction issue, Pyongyang's adamant refusal to dismantle nuclear weapons program was casting serious doubts about any breakthrough in Tokyo-Pyongyang relations.

The North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Japanese-North Korean relations began to deteriorate from the winter of 2002-2003, as North Korea began to escalate tensions on the Korean Peninsula by undertaking a series of provocative steps to reactivate the plutonium-based nuclear weapons program in Yongbyun in violation of several international agreements, including the 1994 Agreed Framework. On January 10, 2003, Pyongyang announced its decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). By late February 2003, the North Korean

Foreign Ministry announced that Pyongyang had reactivated its five-megawatt graphite-moderated nuclear reactor.^{xliv} Such a move clearly violated the Pyongyang Declaration in which North Korea promised Japan to “abide by all relevant international agreements in order to comprehensively resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.”

Against the backdrop of heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula, the Koizumi government made it clear that Japan would work for the dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program through dialogue and pressure. Japan did not want to see a nuclear-armed hostile neighbor with sophisticated ballistic missiles that can threaten Japan’s security. At the same time, it did not want to see the escalation of conflict on the Korean Peninsula that can entangle Japan either directly or indirectly. Within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), those representing the mainstream view assumed that North Korea was attempting to use the nuclear program as a diplomatic card with the U.S. and its allies to obtain economic aid necessary for regime survival. They preferred to pursue a policy of engagement toward North Korea, whereas some in MOFA and many in the Japan Defense Agency believed that North Korea was determined to develop nuclear weapons to ensure security.^{xlv} Therefore, they stressed not to make any concessions to Pyongyang until North Korea abandons its nuclear ambition. Similarly, within the ruling LDP, there were hardliners (e.g., Abe Shinzo) who advocated the use of pressure and sanctions against North Korea for the resolution of the abduction and nuclear issues, whereas the moderates (e.g., Fukuda Yasuo) advocated engagement and dialogue as the best approach to the resolution of the issues with North Korea.^{xlvi} Koizumi basically favored the engagement and dialogue with North Korea without ruling out the use of sanctions and pressure.

In dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis, Japan decided to cooperate fully with the U.S. Japan supported the U.S. proposal to suspend the heavy oil shipment to North Korea from December 2002. At the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee’s meeting in Washington in mid-December 2002, Japan, together with the U.S., urged North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program in a “prompt and verifiable fashion.”^{xlvii} Japan also indicated its willingness to support the U.S. plan to convene a multilateral forum on the North Korean nuclear issue. Such a move clearly irritated North Korea which was demanding direct bilateral talks between Pyongyang and Washington.

North Korea's official media accused Japan of blindly following the U.S. in pursuing a hostile policy toward North Korea. For example, the *Rodong Sinmun*, the official organ of the North Korean regime, charged that Japanese "right-wing forces" were committing wrongs by following Washington's hostile policy towards North Korea.^{xlvi} Furthermore, in a commentary issued on January 27, 2003, it declared that the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue "is not an issue for Japan to presumptuously act upon," for it is a "bilateral issue" to be resolved between Pyongyang and Washington. It slammed the door on Japan by saying that "Japan is not a party concerned with the resolution of the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue and has no pretext or qualification to intervene."^{xli} In addition, it criticized Japan for using "various pretexts" to shelve the liquidation of its past and "deliberately slackened normalizing relations" with North Korea.

Since nuclear-armed North Korea with sophisticated ballistic missiles would pose serious threat to Japan's security, in a major policy speech before the Japanese Diet in January 2003, Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko made it clear that Japan would demand Pyongyang to abide by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), "freeze" its nuclear facilities, and "abandon" all its nuclear weapons development programs.¹ In a related move, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo reiterated the Koizumi government's position that it would not resume normalization talks with North Korea unless Pyongyang would abide by international law and regulations. He added "We cannot allow North Korea to arm itself with nuclear weapons."^{li} In addition, Abe made it clear that Japan would not resume talks with North Korea unless Pyongyang let the families of the five surviving abductees return to Japan and give convincing replies to the set of some 150 questions concerning the ten abductees including eight dead abductees.^{lii}

As Pyongyang continued to ratchet up its provocation by trying to intercept a U.S. reconnaissance plane and launching another anti-ship missile in early March 2003, Koizumi expressed his view that "the Pyongyang Declaration has been breached," partially if not in its entirety.^{liii} In a related move, in his testimony before a parliamentary committee, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo stressed that Pyongyang's provocative acts had "breached" the spirit of the Pyongyang Declaration. He warned that the test firing of a long-range missile or the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel for weapons-grade

plutonium would constitute the “red line,” the crossing of which would nullify the Pyongyang Declaration.^{liv}

Japan’s North Korea policy hardened in the aftermath of the trilateral (U.S.-North Korea-China) talks in Beijing in April 2003 as the talks ended without producing any tangible agreement. Japan was clearly disturbed by the report quoting a North Korean delegate’s assertion at the Beijing meeting that Pyongyang already possessed nuclear weapons and that it had nearly completed reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel into weapons grade plutonium.^{lv} At the U.S.-Japan summit meeting, held in late May, both Bush and Koizumi declared their determination not to tolerate Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program and demanded that North Korea dismantle it in a verifiable manner. Koizumi also declared that Japan would “crack down more vigorously” on illegal activities involving North Korea or pro-Pyongyang supporters in Japan.^{lvi} Following the summit meeting, Japan agreed to participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) proposed by President Bush in May 2003, to interdict weapons of mass destruction shipments involving rogue nations such as North Korea.

Japan’s Response to North Korea’s Nuclear Threat

Starting in the spring of 2003, the Koizumi government began to expand safety inspections and searches for illicit contraband coming in from or shipped to North Korea.^{lvii} In 2002, Japan introduced an export control system which requires prospective exporters to file applications for permission to trade commercial products and dual-use technology that can be diverted for the use of developing weapons of mass destruction. These measures were apparently adopted to cope with the growing suspicion and evidence that firms run by pro-Pyongyang Korean residents in Japan were providing North Korea with dual-use technology and key parts for its missile and nuclear programs. For example, in April Japanese authorities filed criminal charges against Meishin, a trading company run by a pro-Pyongyang Korean resident in Japan that allegedly tried to ship North Korea electronic control devices which can be used in the production of strategic weapons. A shipment of the devices from Meishin was seized by Hong Kong

customs officials at Japan's request, for the shipment was destined to North Korea via Hong Kong and Thailand.^{lviii}

Furthermore, in order to curtail the illicit trade of drugs and counterfeit currency from North Korea, Japan stepped up customs and safety inspections of North Korean ships entering Japanese ports. In 2003, Japan stepped up its checks on North Korean ships visiting its ports by implementing rigid "Port State Control" safety inspections on them.^{lix} More than 70% of North Korean ships entering Japanese ports in the first eight months of 2003 failed to meet the safety standards and were ordered to halt operations.^{lx} In a related move, Japan was also considering to require foreign ships entering Japanese ports to carry adequate insurance before being allowed to enter any Japanese ports. According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, only 2.8% of North Korean ships entering Japanese ports in 2002 had the required insurance.^{lxi} However, it was not until March 1, 2005, that Japan actually put into effect the tough new regulation requiring all foreign vessels weighing more than 100 tons to carry adequate insurance against oil spills and other environmental damages. Apparently, strict inspections and other cumbersome requirements forced some North Korean ships either to delay or cancel their schedules of entering Japanese ports. As a result, the number of North Korean ships making calls on Japanese ports dropped by 29 % from 1,415 in 2002 to 1,071 in 2004.^{lxii}

Additionally, the Koizumi government began to study measures to restrict trade with North Korea and the flow of remittances from pro-Pyongyang Korean residents. Reversing the previous tolerance of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon), Japan stepped up an investigation of the finances of the pro-Pyongyang organization and its affiliated credit unions in the fall of 2001. In this crackdown, Japanese police searched forty-seven Chongryon-related facilities and arrested fifteen people.^{lxiii} Meanwhile, many of the credit unions became bankrupt as a result of mismanagement, embezzlement, and illicit funneling of large sums to North Korea.^{lxiv} Several of these credit unions were restructured under Japanese government supervision after being insolvent. Subsequently, those officials of the Chongryon implicated in the financial scandals or irregularities were investigated and indicted. The Chongryon's financial predicament became more severe as several prefectural and local governments decided not to accord tax-exempt status to the organization and its affiliated

Korean schools in Japan.^{lxv} It was also adversely affected by the rapid dwindling of the organization's membership, as many became disenchanted with the Pyongyang regime which is responsible for massive starvation in the North and serious violation of international law as demonstrated by Kim Jong-Il's admission of the abduction of Japanese nationals in 2002.

Reflecting the deterioration of Tokyo-Pyongyang relations, the volume of bilateral trade declined sharply in 2003 and 2004. For example, in 2003, the value of the two-way trade declined by 33.4% percent to 30.6 billion yen (or \$255 million) from 45.9 billion yen (or \$383 million) in 2002.^{lxvi} In 2004, Japanese North Korean trade totaled 27.3 billion yen (or \$260 million), or 11.5% decrease in yen denomination if not in U.S. dollar.^{lxvii}

The Koizumi government also ruled out the possibility of providing any additional food aid to North Korea. Japan has been one of the largest donors to North Korea. Specifically, from June 1995 to October 2000, Japan provided 1,182, 000 tons of food (mostly rice) aid to North Korea.^{lxviii} Most of the aid (valued at \$1.45 billion) was sent to North Korea free of charge except 350,000 tons which were provided on a long-term credit basis. In the face of North Korea's unwillingness to give up its nuclear weapons program, the Koizumi government ruled out the possibility of extending additional food aid to North Korea.

In order to cope with North Korea's nuclear and missile threat, Japan also adopted several important measures to beef up its military preparedness. Particularly disturbing to Japan has been North Korea's ballistic missiles. North Korea is believed to have deployed over 150 Nodong missiles, capable of hitting Japan with the range of over 1,300 km. North Korea is also in the process of developing Taepodong long-range ballistic missiles which could reach Alaska and parts of the U.S. West coast. In order to monitor the test firing of North Korean ballistic missiles, Japan launched successfully two spy satellites on March 28, 2003.

In a related move, Japan decided to participate in the U.S.-led missile defense system (MDS) in December 2003. To develop a viable anti-missile capability, Japan plans to procure and deploy the Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC)-3 missiles and the Standard Missile (SM)-3 system to defend itself from North Korea's missiles. The PAC-

3 missile system is designed to shoot down enemy missiles shortly before they hit ground targets, while the SM-3 system deployed aboard Aegis-equipped warships is designed to intercept enemy missiles before they enter the earth's atmosphere. Japan would initially spend \$1 billion in 2004 to procure these advanced interceptor missiles and eventually plans to deploy a functionally layered anti-missile defense system at the total cost of \$7 billion by 2007.^{lxix} To be sure, some hawkish Japanese leaders (e.g., Ishiba Shigeru, former Director-General of the Japanese Defense Agency) have advocated the acquisition of cruise missile (e.g., Tomahawk type) for possible preemptive strikes against North Korean missile sites in case of imminent danger of missile attack from the North. According to Ishiba, if Japan waited until North Korean missiles were fired against Japan, it would be "too late."^{lxx}

In the summer of 2003, the Japanese parliament passed three "war contingency bills" which would give the Japanese government new powers to cope with armed attacks on Japan. Such contingency legislation was first discussed among the Japanese conservatives some 40 years ago, but was shelved because of the possibility that it would violate Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. The threat posed by North Korea and international terrorism enabled the Koizumi government to win the support of the main opposition party (the Democratic Party of Japan) for the enactment of this special legislation. Among other things, the new legislation would enable Japan to deploy the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) swiftly by suspending numerous restrictions hindering the effective mobilization and operation of the SDF.^{lxxi}

According to public opinion polls, it became evident that more Japanese perceived North Korea as a greater threat to Japan's security than any other country. For example, according to the opinion survey conducted by the *Mainichi Shimbun* in December 2003, 50% of the respondents regarded North Korea as a threat to Japan's security, while 24% regarded China as a threat. Regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, 75% of the respondents believed there was no possibility of resolving the issue in 2004, while 5% believed in the possibility of progress in the coming year. Pertaining to Japan's food aid to North Korea, 64% maintained that Japan should suspend the aid to North Korea, while 26% supported offering such aid to the North.^{lxxii}

Bilateral Negotiations on the Abduction Issue

In the face of North Korea's unwillingness to comply with the demand of the U.S. and its allies on the nuclear issue, Japan decided to adopt a dual track approach to the solution of the two major issues blocking the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea. First, regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, Japan decided to seek the resolution of the thorny issue through the six-party talks by cooperating closely with the U.S. and other regional powers. On the abduction and other bilateral issues, Japan decided to handle these issues through bilateral talks with North Korea in parallel with the six party talks.

In dealing with North Korea's nuclear threat, Japan was placing its hope on the multilateral diplomacy (i.e., the six-party talks) advocated by the Bush administration rather than the bilateral direct negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington. The multilateral approach was supported strongly by Tokyo as it became a member of the six-party talks in Beijing in August 2003. Although there was no breakthrough at the first round of the six-party talks in August, Japan was encouraged by the agreement reached at that meeting to continue dialogue for the common objective of achieving a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.^{lxxiii} Regarding the package deal, North Korea offered to "freeze" its nuclear program in return for a security guarantee and fuel and other aid, while the U.S. demanded that North Korea dismantle its nuclear weapons program first in an irreversible and verifiable manner.^{lxxiv} Subsequently three additional rounds of talks were held in Beijing from February 2004 to September 2005. However, it was not until September 2005 that a significant agreement was reached on the Korean nuclear issue.

In the meantime, Japan was to deal directly with North Korea on the abduction issue, as the victims of the abduction and their supporters stepped up campaign to pressure the Koizumi government to get satisfactory answers from North Korea concerning the fate of 10 missing abductees, including the eight reportedly dead in the North while in captivity. On the sidelines of the Beijing talks in August 2003, Japan and North Korea held talks concerning the abduction and other issues blocking the resumption of the normalization talks. Specifically, Japan demanded that North Korea allow the families of the five surviving Japanese abductees to visit Japan. At the same time, it demanded information concerning the fate of ten other Japanese, including the

eight abductees reported dead by Pyongyang. North Korea rejected Japan's demand by repeating its accusation that Japan had broken its promise to send the five back to the North after what was supposed to be a temporary homecoming in October 2002. Nevertheless, they agreed to resolve these issues through further negotiations on the basis of the Pyongyang Declaration.^{lxxv}

Against this background, many Japanese began to advocate the imposition of economic sanctions on North Korea. Such a move was advocated not only by the families of the victims of the abduction and their supporters but also by some well known hardliners within the ruling LDP such as the party's General Secretary Abe Shinzo. In a campaign speech delivered in mid-October 2003, in connection with the forthcoming November parliamentary elections, Abe emphasized that there was a need to intensify a nationwide campaign to pressure North Korea for the resolution of the nuclear and abduction issues and also the necessity to enact legislation enabling the imposition of economic sanction against North Korea.^{lxxvi} On the other hand, moderate leaders within the LDP (e.g., Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo) were more cautious than Abe on the question of economic sanctions against North Korea, for "there is a doubt about the effectiveness of unilateral sanctions undertaken by Japan." According to Fukuda, "for now, it is the major policy inclination of the Koizumi government to pursue dialogue with North Korea."^{lxxvii}

Following the ruling LDP's victory in the November 2003 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Koizumi did not rule out the possibility of sanctions against North Korea "if it continued to ignore Japan's demands on the abduction issue."^{lxxviii} Koizumi also indicated his plan to take up the abduction issue at the next round of the six-party talks in Beijing. North Korea's response to these developments was clearly negative. According to Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), now that Tokyo insisted on taking up the abduction issue at the Beijing talks, North Korea would "never" accept Japan's participation in the forthcoming multilateral talks in Beijing.^{lxxix} It also threatened not to take part in the talks if the abduction issue were raised.

Against this background, a group of Japanese lawmakers led by Hirasawa Katsuei, a LDP Diet-member and secretary-general of the supra-partisan Diet-members' League for the Rescue of the Victims of the Abduction ("ratchi giin remmei"), held talks with

North Korean officials (including Ambassador Jong Thae-Hwa in charge of normalization talks with Japan) on the abduction issue in Beijing in late December 2003. The initiative for the unofficial talks was taken by Pyongyang to mollify Japanese public opinion on the abduction issue and prevent possible Japanese economic sanctions by finding a solution to the surviving abductees' family reunion issue.^{lxxx} North Korean officials told Japanese lawmakers that Pyongyang was willing to send the family members of the five surviving abductees to Japan if they came to Pyongyang to meet their family members and return to Japan with them.^{lxxxi} The North Korean offer was conveyed to the Koizumi government by Hirasawa.

Meanwhile, it became evident that a breakthrough in the abduction issue was necessary for the Koizumi government, as more Japanese were concerned about the abduction issue than the North's nuclear weapons program. According to the public opinion survey conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office in November 2003, 90% of the respondents said their main concern was the abduction issue, while 66% said they were concerned about North Korea's nuclear arms program. Only 35% responded that they cared about the normalization of diplomatic ties between Japan and North Korea.^{lxxxii}

Against this backdrop, in mid-January 2004, a team of Japanese Foreign Ministry officials visited Pyongyang to take custody of two Japanese nationals detained by North Korea. When they attempted to take up the abduction issue, North Korean officials slammed the door by reiterating Pyongyang's demand that Japan "keep its promise" and send back the five former abductees who had reneged on the promise to return to Pyongyang after a two-week home visit. Clearly, Pyongyang's position was tougher than what Ambassador Jong indicated to Hirasawa in Beijing in December 2003. In mid-February 2004, another team of Japanese Foreign Ministry officials headed by Tanaka Hitoshi was dispatched to Pyongyang to explore the possibility of securing North Korea's concessions on the repatriation of abductees' family members to Japan for family reunion. However, they too failed to secure any concessions from their counterparts in Pyongyang.^{lxxxiii} Nevertheless, according to Foreign Minister Kawaguchi, "issues concerning North Korea are on Japan's top diplomatic agenda" and Japan would continue to "seek a comprehensive resolution" to the abduction issue as well as the missile and nuclear issues.^{lxxxiv}

In an attempt to pressure North Korea to come to terms on the abduction and nuclear issues, on February 9, 2004, the Japanese parliament passed an important bill revising the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law which empowers the Japanese government to impose unilaterally economic sanctions on a country like North Korea without requiring a United Nations resolution or an international agreement mandating such actions. Under the new legislation, the Japanese government can ban cash remittances, restrict trade, freeze assets in Japan and take other additional measures deemed necessary against a country that poses a threat to Japan's peace and security.^{lxxxv} In case of economic sanctions, this legislation can drastically curtail the flow of remittances from pro-Pyongyang Korean residents who were reported to have remitted over \$85 million in 2002. Although Koizumi maintained that his government was not considering immediate economic sanctions against North Korea, his government's chief spokesman did not rule out possible sanctions in the future "if North Korea makes things worse."^{lxxxvi} Pyongyang reacted angrily by denouncing it as a "wanton violation" of the Pyongyang Declaration, warning that Japan would be responsible for "all consequences to be entailed by its foolish moves."^{lxxxvii}

To apply further pressure on North Korea, in the spring of 2004, lawmakers of the ruling parties (the LDP and the Komeito) introduced a bill to prohibit certain foreign ships from entering Japanese ports. The legislative move was prompted by frustration among ruling party members about the lack of progress in resolving the nuclear and abduction issues at the second round of the six-party talks in Beijing in February 2004. The new legislation was designed to ban port calls by vessels from certain unfriendly countries for a limited period of time if the Cabinet determined such an action necessary to maintain Japan's peace and security. The bill clearly targeted North Korean ships which were suspected of being engaged in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs, counterfeit currencies and transporting equipment and parts used for the production of strategic weapons. Pyongyang strongly denounced the proposed bill as an "evil law" against North Korea.^{lxxxviii} Together with the revised Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law, the enactment of the new legislation would clearly strengthen the Koizumi government's ability to deal with the abduction issue as well as

Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program by applying pressure, if necessary, on North Korea.

As it became increasingly clear that Japan was taking preliminary steps toward the possible imposition of economic sanctions against North Korea, Pyongyang indicated a more flexible position on the abduction issue. At a secretly arranged meeting with the ruling LDP's former Vice President Yamasaki Taku in Dalian, China, in early April 2004, North Korean Ambassador Jong Thae-Hwa indicated Pyongyang's willingness to allow a high ranking Japanese government official, instead of the five surviving abductees, to come to Pyongyang to pick up the eight family members.^{lxxxix} North Korea's new proposal was conveyed to Prime Minister Koizumi by Yamasaki a few days later. It was initially assumed that the proposed mission could be carried out by a Cabinet member. However, Koizumi indicated his willingness to take up the mission.^{xc} Koizumi's willingness to visit Pyongyang again was not a real surprise to his colleagues, for he had revealed more than once his desire to normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea before the end of his tenure as the Prime Minister in 2006. Obviously, he did not give up the hope of becoming the Japanese Prime Minister who succeeds in establishing diplomatic ties with North Korea. In addition, Koizumi wanted to discuss the nuclear and missile issues directly with Kim Jong-Il in the hope to persuade him to abandon Pyongyang's nuclear program.

At the bilateral working-level talks held in Beijing in early May 2004, Japan and North Korea agreed on a plan for breaking the diplomatic stalemate over the abduction issue. Under the plan, Prime Minister Koizumi would visit Pyongyang to hold talks with Kim Jong-Il and bring the families of five former abductees to Japan with him.^{xcii} As a part of the agreement, Japan indicated its willingness to resume diplomatic normalization talks, suspended after October 2002, and discuss humanitarian aid for North Korea if Pyongyang agreed to allow the family reunion in Japan and provided additional information about ten other Japanese abduction victims.^{xciii}

The Second Koizumi-Kim Summit Meeting

On May 22, 2004, Koizumi visited Pyongyang again to hold talks with Kim Jong-II. At the summit meeting, Kim agreed to allow the families of five former Japanese abductees to go to Japan for a family reunion. Regarding Japan's request for further information on the ten missing Japanese, including the eight who were reported to have died in North Korea, Kim promised Koizumi to conduct a comprehensive new investigation on them.^{xciii} On the security issue, when Koizumi emphasized the importance of a comprehensive solution to pending issues, including Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons and missiles, Kim reiterated North Korea's position that Pyongyang had to maintain a nuclear deterrent as a counterbalance to U.S. threat and pressure. Nevertheless, he reassured Koizumi that his goal was to achieve a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, and that Pyongyang's proposal for freezing its nuclear facilities in exchange for energy assistance and other compensation through the six-party talks was a first step in that direction.^{xciv} Kim also promised Koizumi that the North would continue to maintain a self-imposed moratorium on missile test-firing.

The second Koizumi-Kim summit meeting brought about diplomatic windfalls for North Korea. At the meeting, Koizumi promised Kim 250,000 tons of food and \$10 million worth of medical assistance through international organizations.^{xcv} In addition, the Japanese Prime Minister pledged that Japan would not invoke economic sanctions as long as North Korea observed the Pyongyang Declaration of September 17, 2002. During the 90-minute meeting, the two leaders also agreed to hold working-level talks for the resumption of the suspended normalization talks between the two countries. In return, Pyongyang allowed five children of the repatriated abductees to go to Japan with the Prime Minister, while promising the remaining three family members of former abductee Soga Hitomi (i.e., her husband, Charles Jenkins, and two daughters) could have a family reunion at a third country to decide on their future destination.^{xcvi} Jenkins, a U.S. army deserter, and his two daughters refused to go to Japan with Koizumi, fearing extradition to the U.S.

Although international reactions to Koizumi's second Pyongyang visit were generally favorable, the reactions of the Japanese opposition parties were divided: The Democratic Party was critical of Koizumi's offering of food aid to North Korea as well

his promise not to invoke economic sanctions against the North. On the other hand, the socialists (SDP) and the communists (JCP) welcomed Koizumi's Pyongyang visit.^{xcvii} According to an opinion survey conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on May 23, 2004, 63% of the respondents said they supported Koizumi's second visit to Pyongyang. However, 70% said they were not satisfied with the result of the summit talks in Pyongyang. Specifically, 56% of the respondents did not approve of Koizumi's pledge to provide North Korea with 250,000 tons of food and \$10 million worth of medical assistance. Regarding North Korea's promise to reinvestigate the cases of 10 missing Japanese, 64% of the respondents did not believe such an investigation would lead to discovering their whereabouts.^{xcviii} Thus, the poll indicated that, while giving Koizumi high marks for bringing home the family members of the five surviving abductees, most believed that Koizumi had paid too high a price. Even some conservative leaders of the ruling LDP criticized the Prime Minister for making easy compromises and concessions, such as his generous offer of humanitarian aid and his promise not to invoke economic sanctions against North Korea as long as it observed the Pyongyang Declaration.^{xcix}

To cope with these criticisms and allegations, Koizumi announced in the plenary session of the lower house of the Japanese Diet on May 25 that "normalization of relations cannot be achieved unless the abduction issue is resolved in a convincing manner and a comprehensive resolution is reached in other issues, such as North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs."^c In an attempt to pressure North Korea to make concessions on the remaining issues, in June 2004 the Japanese parliament enacted a new law to ban certain foreign ships from making port calls of Japan. It was designed to prohibit the entry of North Korean ships (e.g., the *Mangyongbong-92*) suspected of being engaged in the illegal trafficking of money, drugs, counterfeit currencies and transporting equipment and supplies from Japan for the production of strategic weapons in North Korea.^{ci}

Against this background, in a move to mollify Japanese public opinion, Pyongyang announced its decision to let Charles Jenkins and his two daughters meet Jenkin's wife, Soga Hitomi, a surviving abductee, in Jakarta, Indonesia, on July 9, 2004. North Korea also announced its willingness to repatriate four surviving Japanese Red Army members to Japan.^{cii} They had been living in North Korea after hijacking a

Japanese passenger plane in 1970. In the past, Pyongyang had rejected Tokyo's demand to repatriate them. These moves were clearly designed to improve North Korea's image in Japan so as to cultivate a better atmosphere for the resumption of normalization talks with Japan. It was also suspected that Pyongyang's prompt actions on the Soga's family reunion and the Japanese Red Army members' repatriation were designed to help Prime Minister Koizumi in the upper house elections of July 11, 2004.

In early August 2004, the Koizumi government announced its decision to ship the first half of the food aid and medical supplies to North Korea out of the humanitarian aid package promised at the second Pyongyang summit in May. It would include 125,000 tons of food aid (worth \$40 million) and \$7 million of medical supplies to be distributed through international organizations.^{ciii} It was designed to encourage Pyongyang to reciprocate the goodwill at the forthcoming bilateral working level talks in Beijing. However, the victims of abduction and their supporters plus some hardliners within the ruling LDP expressed reservations about sending the aid, arguing that Tokyo should wait until Pyongyang's offer of some positive results on the ongoing investigation of the 10 missing Japanese abductees.

Tokyo's Disappointment with Pyongyang's "Reinvestigation" Results

Following the upper house election in July 2004, in order to find out the results of Pyongyang's new investigations of the ten missing abductees, three rounds of Tokyo-Pyongyang working-level talks were held between August and November 2004. However, Japan received from Pyongyang very little new information concerning the abductees in question, as Pyongyang reiterated its earlier position that eight out of the ten had died in North Korea, while the remaining two had never entered its territory.^{civ} In November 2004, at the third round of the bilateral working-level talks in Pyongyang, North Korea handed over to Japan 13 different items pertaining to the 10 missing abductees,^{cv} including what was believed to be the cremated remains of Yokota Megumi, a victim who was abducted in 1977 by North Korean agents at the age of 13 and reported to have committed suicide due to mental illness in 1994, after marrying a North Korean man and bearing his daughter.

In early December, DNA tests of the remains of Yokota by Japanese forensic experts concluded that the cremated ashes did not belong to Yokota Megumi, the kidnap victim, but were determined to be those of two unknown people.^{cv} Enraged by the DNA test results, Tokyo lodged a stern protest to Pyongyang. Prime Minister Koizumi, who was being accused domestically of being too soft on North Korea, called the false evidence “extremely regrettable.”^{cvi} Although Koizumi ruled out the imposition of economic sanctions on North Korea, he made it clear to reporters that his government was going to suspend the shipment of the remaining half of the food assistance promised to Pyongyang in May 2004.^{cviii}

Apparently, North Korea has underestimated Japan’s ability in conducting a highly sophisticated DNA analysis and assumed that no credible DNA analysis would be possible on the remains cremated at over 1,200 degrees Celsius. In fact, Japan’s national police forensic laboratory failed in its attempts to identify DNA from what was believed to be Yokota’s cremated remains. However, Yoshii Tomio, a forensic expert at Teikyo University, was able to identify the DNA of the remains twice through the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method.^{cix} On December 25, 2004, Japan lodged a strong formal protest against North Korea, saying the documents and “material evidence” (e.g., cremated remains of Yokota Megumi) North Korea handed over to Japan at the bilateral meeting in November 2004 had failed to substantiate Pyongyang’s claim of the fate of the 10 missing abductees. Japan urged North Korea to give more accurate and credible explanations about the fate of these 10 abductees and hinted at economic sanctions in case no progress was forthcoming on the resolution of the issue.^{cx} At the same time, in addition to the further investigation into the cases involving these 10 missing abductees, Japan demanded the return of any surviving abductees to Japan and the extradition of those involved in the kidnapping of Japanese nationals.

It is doubtful, however, if any one of these eight abductees were still alive in North Korea. Rather, it seems more realistic to assume that all of them were dead, perhaps not necessarily in the same manner that North Korea had stated. In addition to illness and accidents, one cannot rule out the possibility that some of them were executed or disposed of as their identities as abductees were exposed to the outside world (e.g., the revelation of the identity of Taguchi Yayeko, alias “Li Un-Hae,” by the Pyongyang’s

captured agent, Kim Hyon Hee, in 1991; and Hara Tadaaki by another captured North Korean agent, Shin Kwang-Soo, in 1985).^{cxix} Or possibly some were disposed of as a result of the violation of the order not to communicate with anyone including one's parents in Japan (e.g., in the case of Ishioka Toru and Arimoto Keiko who smuggled out a letter to their parents in Japan through a foreign visitor in 1993).^{cxii} In order to hide any trace of kidnapping, there are strong indications that Pyongyang ordered relevant agencies to eliminate both material evidence and records pertaining to them.^{cxiii}

On January 26, 2005, Pyongyang dismissed the official Japanese DNA test results of Yokota Megumi's cremated remains as a "sheer fabrication" and called on Japan to probe the truth of the "faked" results and sternly punish those responsible. North Korea also demanded the return of Yokota's remains.^{cxiv} Pyongyang called into question the methods used in the DNA tests and claimed that the remains could not contain any surviving DNA after being heated to 1,200 degrees Celsius.^{cxv} In its statement, Pyongyang also asked how researchers at Teikyo University were able to extract and identify DNA when Japan's National Research Institute of Police Science had failed to do so by using the samples from the same remains.^{cxvi} Furthermore, according to Wada Haruki who visited Pyongyang and had lengthy talks on the DNA tests with North Korean officials, including Song Il-Ho, a deputy director of Asian Affairs Bureau of the DPRK Foreign Ministry in charge of the Japanese affairs, North Korea also rejected the reliability of Japan's DNA tests on Yokota's cremated remains on other grounds. First, Pyongyang questioned the reliability of the Japan's DNA report on Yokota's remains, for it was neither signed by the chief investigator who had conducted the DNA test nor counter signed by a witness who had observed the process.^{cxvii} Second, in an interview with a British science journal, *Nature*, Yoshii Tomio, confirmed that he successfully extracted DNA twice from the cremated remains of Yokota Megumi through the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method, which revealed that the remains were not those of Yokota but of two unknown people. In the same interview, however, Yoshii admitted that "his [DNA] tests are not conclusive" and that it "is possible the samples were contaminated" by someone else's sweat or oils.^{cxviii} Although Takashima Katsuhisa, a spokesman for Japan's Foreign Ministry, said that Japanese officials wanted to retest the DNA in question,^{cxix} it was not possible, because Yoshii had used up five samples in his

tests. As a result, there remains no additional useable bone(s) in the cremated remains for repeating any further DNA tests through the PCR method used by Yoshii.^{cxx}

North Korea's "fabrication" charge against Tokyo's DNA test sparked sharp reactions from the Koizumi government. Koizumi urged North Korea to make a "sincere" response to the abduction issue, indicating that public calls for sanctions "are growing hard to ignore."^{cxxi} In fact, some hardliners within the ruling LDP (such as the acting Secretary-General of the ruling LDP Abe Shinzo) declared that "[the] time has come to discuss the actual schedule for economic sanctions."^{cxxii} Also, several influential pressure groups representing the interests of the abduction victims stepped up a nationwide campaign demanding an immediate imposition of economic sanctions against North Korea.^{cxxiii} On February 8, 2005, one of the groups (i.e., the "kazokukai") delivered to the Prime Minister a petition with over 5 million signatures demanding sanctions against North Korea.^{cxxiv} Beside the Association of the Families of Victims of Abduction ("kazokukai"), the Association for the Rescue of Abduction Victims ("sukuukai") and the Diet-members' League for the Rescue of the Victims of Abduction by North Korea ("ratchi giin remmei") have also been active in the movement. These interest groups have played a major role, not only in shaping Japanese public opinion by articulating their views on the abduction issue but also in pressuring the Koizumi government to take a tougher policy toward North Korea on the abduction issue.^{cxxv} According to an opinion poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, over 80 percent of the respondents supported the imposition of economic sanctions on North Korea.^{cxxvi}

Regarding economic sanctions against North Korea, moderate elements both within and without the ruling LDP were generally more cautious than the hardliners for a number of reasons. First, it was doubtful if sanctions would have the desired effect without the cooperation of China and South Korea, which were providing most of the food, energy and other commodities to North Korea.^{cxxvii} Second, Japan's unilateral sanctions would not facilitate the collapse of the Kim Jong-Il regime but force the Kim regime to tighten its control from inside and strengthen the forces opposed to reform and liberalization.^{cxxviii} Third, sanctions could upset the six-party talks that were about to enter a crucial stage by giving North Korea an excuse not to participate in the negotiations.^{cxxix} And in view of the other powers' willingness to offer economic aid and

other incentives to North Korea in order to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions, Japan's hasty imposition of unilateral sanctions could arouse the resentment of other powers.

Like the moderates within the LDP, the Koizumi government has been cautious in its approach to economic sanctions. Instead of undertaking full-fledged economic sanctions unilaterally, it has adopted gradual incremental steps to pressure North Korea, while seeking a dialogue with Pyongyang in the hope of securing further information and data on the ten missing Japanese abductees from North Korea. In addition to suspending the shipment of the remaining half of the food aid promised to North Korea in May 2004, Japan put into effect a tough new law on March 1, 2005, requiring all foreign vessels weighing more than 100 tons to carry adequate insurance against oil spills and other environmental damage.^{cxxx} The new insurance requirement rules did not single out North Korea by name, but it effectively barred most North Korean ships from entering Japan because only 2.5 percent of them carried the required insurance.^{cxxx}ⁱ Since the newly-introduced measure would preclude most North Korean ships from entering Japanese ports, it was expected to curtail further bilateral trade between Japan and North Korea. Pyongyang reacted angrily to Tokyo's new insurance requirements for foreign ships, denouncing it as de facto economic sanctions against North Korea and warning Tokyo of the "catastrophic consequences" of the "malicious hostile moves against the DPRK."^{cxxx}ⁱⁱ In retaliation, North Korea announced its decision to lift a self-imposed moratorium in effect since the fall of 1999 on testing long-range missiles.

Concerning the abduction issue, Pyongyang was not receptive to Japan's proposal to hold talks on the abduction issue, maintaining that the issue was already settled and it had no further information to provide. Pyongyang was highly critical of Japan's announced plan to raise the abduction issue at the upcoming fourth round of the six-party talks scheduled to be convened in Beijing on July 26, 2005. Through the official KCNA, Pyongyang denounced the Japanese plan as an "extremely egotistic and double-dealing political diplomatic stand of Japan."^{cxxx}ⁱⁱⁱ It added that it would not "deal with Japan even if the talks are resumed." However, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hosoda Hiroyuki brushed aside the North Korean statement, saying that Japan "will stick to its plan."^{cxxx}^{iv}

The Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks

When the fourth round of the six-party talks was held in Beijing on July 26, 2005, after nearly one year's delay from the originally agreed on schedule, Japan found itself in a difficult position, as several powers (e.g., China, Russia, South Korea) were critical of Japan's plan to take up the abduction issue at the six-party talks, for such an action could distract the multilateral forum's attentions from the main task of tackling North Korea's nuclear weapons development program.^{cxxxv} Nevertheless, in his keynote remarks to the six-party talks, Japan's chief delegate Sasae Kenichiro urged North Korea to abandon all its nuclear programs and solve the missile and abduction issues so as to realize the normalization of Japanese-North Korean relations. Sasae's attempts to hold a dialogue with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Kye-Gwan, on the sidelines of the six-party talks, did not materialize until August 7, when the two talked for 20 minutes. In response to Japan's demand for the repatriation of the surviving abductees, investigation into the fate of the 10 missing abductees and the handover of North Korean officials involved in the kidnappings, Kim merely promised to convey Japan's requests to his government.^{cxxxvi}

The political atmosphere changed noticeably when the fourth round of the six-party talks resumed after a lengthy recess on September 13. The Koizumi government was in a much better position to deal with North Korea as a result of the ruling LDP's landslide victory in the general election on September 11. The victory strengthened significantly the power position of Koizumi. His ruling LDP won 296 out of 480 seats in the House of Representatives. Together with its ruling coalition partner, the Komeito, which won 31 seats, the ruling coalition under the Koizumi's leadership came to control 327 out of 480 seats or more than a two-thirds majority in the powerful lower house.^{cxxxvii} Koizumi was not only reelected Prime Minister of Japan but also his government's support rate among the electorate climbed to over 60%, an increase of 20 percent from pre-election figures, according to a poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in the wake of the election victory. In short, as a result of the landslide victory in the parliamentary elections, Koizumi's political position became much stronger in dealing with both domestic and foreign policy issues.

Apparently, Pyongyang did not overlook the implications of the Japanese election. Since the ruling LDP would be governing Japan for the next four years, Pyongyang had to decide whether it wanted to make a deal with Prime Minister Koizumi before the expiration of his term in September 2006 or wait for his successors who are most likely to be hardliners toward North Korea. Evidently, Pyongyang has decided to make a deal with Koizumi while he is in power. As a result, Pyongyang's attitudes toward Tokyo became more conciliatory after the September elections. Another major reason for Pyongyang's changed attitudes toward Japan can be found in its apparent decision to settle the nuclear standoff through a package deal with the U.S. and other powers. In working out the framework for a settlement with the U.S. and other regional powers, in return for Pyongyang's abandonment of its nuclear weapons program, North Korea clearly wants security guarantees, economic assistance, and diplomatic recognitions by the U.S. and Japan. For, among other things, rapprochement with Japan is expected to bring about over \$10 billion of economic aid to Pyongyang from Tokyo.

When the six-party talks resumed in Beijing on September 13, Pyongyang's attitudes toward Japan thus became noticeably conciliatory and its delegates were readily accessible to their Japanese counterparts. Unlike the first session of the fourth round of the six-party talks in late July and early August, Kim Kye-Gwan was willing on a daily basis to talk with his Japanese counterpart, Sasae Kenichiro, on outstanding abduction, missile and nuclear issues. On the sidelines of the six-party talks, on September 18, they agreed to resume bilateral working level talks as a first step toward the resumption of full-dress normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang before the convening of the next round of the six-party talks in Beijing.

On September 19, in a dramatic turn to six-party negotiations, Pyongyang agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons and nuclear development programs and rejoin the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in exchange for energy and economic assistance from neighboring states and security guarantee from the United States.^{cxxxviii} In addition, the statement said that North Korea and the U.S. would commit to a peaceful coexistence and to take steps for normalizing relations subject to bilateral "policies." Also, Japan and North Korea agreed to take steps to normalize relations in accordance

with Pyongyang Declaration of September 2002 by resolving the problems of the past and other outstanding issues between the two countries.^{cxxxix} At the same time, the six nations agreed to promote economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and investment, bilaterally and multilaterally.^{cxl} Details concerning the implementation of the agreement were to be worked out by the six-powers who agreed to hold another round of talks in Beijing in November. The joint statement embodying the general principles of settlement on the North Korean nuclear issue was hailed by leaders of the powers as a major achievement of the six-party multilateral diplomacy for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The Koizumi government welcomed North Korea's pledge to abandon its nuclear weapons program as a solid foundation for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.^{cxli} It has also welcomed Pyongyang's willingness to take steps to normalize bilateral relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration and on the basis of the settlement of the outstanding issues of concern between Tokyo and Pyongyang. In a sense, the joint statement boosted the Koizumi government's hope for the peaceful settlement of North Korea's nuclear issue. At the same time, it enhanced considerably the prospects for the resumption of normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang. In accordance with the agreement reached on September 18, Tokyo and Pyongyang agreed to hold bilateral working-level talks in Beijing in early November 2005.^{cxlii} According to Foreign Minister Machimura, the forthcoming Tokyo-Pyongyang talks would cover outstanding issues, as a necessary step for paving the way for the eventual "normalization of diplomatic relations."^{cxliii}

In his major policy speech before the plenary session of the House of Representatives on September 26, Koizumi declared that "Japan seeks normalization of its relations with North Korea on the basis of [a] comprehensive settlement of problems" such as Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs and the fate of Japanese abductees. Koizumi has invested political capital in engaging North Korea and has professed his intentions to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea by the time he leaves office in September 2006. As the prospect for the settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue improved substantially as a result of the breakthrough at the six-party talks in September, many began to speculate whether or not Koizumi would visit Pyongyang again.

According to Foreign Minister Machimura, Koizumi could visit Pyongyang for a third time if the conditions were right.^{cxliiv} In a similar vein, Yamasaki Taku, former LDP Vice President and Koizumi's close ally, predicted that there is "a fifty-fifty possibility" for Koizumi to visit North Korea again before he leaves office in September 2006. He added that Koizumi's third visit "will be realized on the occasion of the signing ceremony to mark normalization" of bilateral diplomatic relations between the two countries.^{cxlv} Meanwhile, North Korea also indicated its willingness to welcome "any senior Japanese" leader's (including Prime Minister Koizumi's) visit to Pyongyang to improve ties.^{cxlvi}

In early November, Japan and North Korea held their first senior working-level talks in a year in Beijing. Japan asked for specific measures from North Korea, including the return of any surviving abductees to Japan, further information on the fate of the missing Japanese abductees and extradition of those who were involved in the abductions. However, North Korea reiterated its position that eight out of the ten people had died in North Korea after being kidnapped and the two others had never entered the country. On the Japanese DNA analysis of Yokota's remains, North Korea did not change its view that Japan's analysis is not acceptable.^{cxlvii} Despite the lack of progress in resolving pending issues, both sides maintained that the meeting was useful in tackling the outstanding issues impeding the resumption of normalization talks. In order to facilitate the talks, Japan proposed to set up a separate discussion group for each one of three specific issues, such as the abductions of Japanese nationals, North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development programs and the settlement of issues related to the past (e.g., the compensation issue). Japan's plan is to hold separate discussions on these issues "on a parallel basis."^{cxlviii} Both sides agreed to study the idea further and to hold another round of talks in the near future. The outcome of bilateral talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang will be influenced to a large degree by whether or not the six powers can work out a concrete plan for the implementation of the agreement contained in the September 19th joint statement. If a viable implementation plan for the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program can be reached by the six-party talks, such a development will undoubtedly facilitate the process of normalizing diplomatic ties between Japan and North Korea. Conversely, if the six powers fail to work out a road map for the implementation of the September 19th agreement, it could stalemate

normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang. It is evident that without resolving North Korea's nuclear weapons program, it will be impossible for Japan to normalize diplomatic ties with North Korea, for the normalization of Japanese-North Korean diplomatic relations will require Japan to provide massive economic aid (e.g., over \$10 billion) to Pyongyang.

On November 9, 2005, the fifth round of the six-party talks was convened in Beijing for the purpose of drawing up a timetable to implement the principles of settlement contained in the September 19th joint statement. The talks turned sour as North Korea demanded the U.S. lift its sanctions against the eight North Korean firms whose assets were frozen by the U.S. in October for being suspected of engaging in weapons proliferation. It also demanded the lifting of sanctions against a bank in Macau that was accused of laundering counterfeit U.S. currency for North Korea. Furthermore, Pyongyang refused to disarm completely without getting concessions along the way and insisted that it would give up its nuclear programs and nuclear weapons in four stages, provided that it received a light-water nuclear reactor first. On the other hand, the U.S. wanted to see Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program dismantled before granting any major rewards. More specifically, it wanted North Korea to rejoin the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and accept inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As a result, the fifth round of the six-party talks ended without producing any breakthrough, even though the parties agreed to meet again "at the earliest possible date."^{cxlix} However, in early December, North Korea declared it would not participate in the next round of the six-party talks unless the U.S. lifted financial sanctions against the eight North Korean firms allegedly involved in the proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction as well as the sanctions against the Macau bank accused of laundering counterfeit U.S. money (or "the super note") for North Korea.^{cl} Apparently, the suspension of financial transactions with North Korea by the Banco Delta Asia in Macau in the wake of the U.S. imposition of sanctions has caused a great deal of difficulty for the North Korean regime. However, the U.S. has rejected the North Korean demands. Under the circumstances, many observers are skeptical about the possibility of resuming the six-party talks anytime soon.

Against the back drop of growing tensions between the U.S. and North Korea, there are indications that Japan and North Korea are planning to restart bilateral talks in the near future over North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals and other outstanding issues as a preliminary step toward the resumption of full-dress normalization talks. The talks between Japan and North Korea are anticipated to take place before the resumption of the six-party talks which are expected to take place in early 2006. Vice Foreign Minister Yachi Shotaro told reporters toward the end of November that Japan and North Korea could hold new talks on establishing diplomatic relations as early as mid-December 2005.^{cli} Apparently, the Koizumi government wants to settle the outstanding bilateral issues in anticipation of the peaceful settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue through the six-party talks. It remains to be seen if a real breakthrough can take place in the forthcoming Japanese-North Korean talks.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, a few conclusions can be drawn: First, unlike many of his predecessors, Prime Minister Koizumi has taken important initiatives toward North Korea, even at the risk of irritating the United States. Such a bold initiative has been undertaken for a number of reasons. Many have attributed Koizumi's actions to political ambitions wishing to be known as the Japanese leader who has successfully settled one of the major remaining issues stemming from Japan's defeat in World War II. Also, the initiatives reflect his desire for Japan to play a greater role commensurate with its economic power in the international political arena. In view of the geographic proximity and strategic importance of Korea to Japan, it is natural for Japan to play an important role in dealing with peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. At any rate, Koizumi's diplomatic initiative toward North Korea has been consistent with the ruling LDP's Korea policy in the postwar era, for it is geared to the preservation of the divided Korea through the soft-landing of North Korea, for any abrupt political change on the Korean Peninsula (e.g., the collapse of North Korea, the renewal of war, or shaky reunification of Korea) will not serve Japan's national interest as well as the continuation of a divided Korea.

Second, the Koizumi government's initial optimism for the rapid normalization of Tokyo-Pyongyang relations was quickly dashed as the Japanese were shocked by the severity of tragedy in the death of eight of thirteen Japanese abductees. North Korea's clumsy and unsatisfactory explanations concerning the circumstances surrounding the deaths of these victims infuriated numerous Japanese, who demanded the truth about their fate. Also, many Japanese were infuriated by North Korea's unwillingness to allow the surviving five abductees to stay in Japan permanently plus Pyongyang's refusal to allow the family members of these five surviving abductees to go to Japan for the family reunion. Even though the surviving abductees' family reunion was realized after nearly two years of lengthy bilateral negotiations, Pyongyang's recalcitrant attitude toward the abduction issue has not only disappointed many Japanese but also aggravated their feelings toward North Korea. Whereas Pyongyang contends that the abduction issue has been settled with the return to Japan of five surviving abductees plus their family members to Japan, Tokyo maintains that the abduction issue cannot be settled until it finds out the truth about the fate of 10 missing abductees including the eight reportedly dead. North Korea has failed so far to present credible information and evidence to substantiate its claims. As a result, there are some Japanese, including some Cabinet members, who believe these missing abductees are still alive in North Korea. It seems unrealistic, however, to expect the return of any one of them alive, for most of them have died not because of illness or accidents (as North Korea has described) but more likely because of being executed or disposed of when they became liabilities to the regime. To be sure, it is highly unlikely that Pyongyang will tell the truth about their fate so long as Kim Jong-Il is in power.

Third, the revelation of a clandestine HEU program has not only shocked the Japanese, but also undermined the trustworthiness of the Kim Jong-Il regime which promised to comply with "all related international agreements" on the nuclear issues in the Pyongyang Declaration. Pyongyang's ratcheting up of provocations by reactivating its nuclear facilities (which were frozen under the 1994 Agreed Framework), extracting and reprocessing the spent nuclear fuel, and boasting of the possession of nuclear weapons simply made it impossible for Japan to continue normalization talks with North Korea. Since the nuclear-armed North Korea with a sophisticated delivery capability (i.e.,

ballistic missiles) could pose a serious threat to Japan's security, the Koizumi government is determined to thwart Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program by cooperating closely with the U.S. and South Korea. In addition, it has no intention of seeking diplomatic normalization with Pyongyang so long as Pyongyang retains its nuclear weapons program.

Fourth, regarding Japan's compensation to North Korea, the Koizumi government has made it clear that Japan will not provide any economic assistance to North Korea until diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang have been normalized. Clearly, Japan has no intention either to normalize diplomatic relations or provide any economic assistance to North Korea so long as Pyongyang continues to push ahead with its nuclear weapons program. Tokyo has made it clear that Japan will provide economic assistance to North Korea only after the normalization of diplomatic relations. Although the scale of Japan's economic aid is yet to be determined through further negotiations, Pyongyang is known to be seeking over \$10 billion in economic aid from Japan. If Pyongyang is serious about getting economic assistance from Japan, it is imperative for North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program. In this regard, it is encouraging that North Korea agreed at the fourth round of the six-party talks in Beijing in September 2005, to abandon its nuclear weapons and nuclear programs in return for the provision of economic assistance, security guarantees and diplomatic recognition by the U.S., Japan and others.

Fifth, a drastic shift in power relations between the conservative forces and the left-wing progressive forces in Japan in the post-Cold War era has also influenced the Koizumi government's North Korea policy. Unlike their influence during the Cold War era, the left-wing forces friendly toward North Korea have been marginalized as a result of losing much of their power and influence in Japan in the post-Cold War era. The Socialists (SDP) and Communists (JCP) have won merely 7 and 9 seats respectively out of 480 seats contested in the 2005 general election. Furthermore, Kim Jong-Il's admission of the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea in September 2002 has not only embarrassed many pro-Pyongyang left-wingers but also undermined their credibility, because many of them either toed the North Korean line on the abduction issue or attempted to defend Pyongyang's innocence in the abduction cases by questioning the reliability of the Japanese police authorities' reports on the abduction

cases. As a result, they have been ineffective in counterbalancing the views presented by the abduction victims and their supporters.

In stark contrast, the abduction victims and their relatives have come to enjoy the support and sympathy of Japanese people following the Pyongyang summit of September 2002. They are quite well organized as pressure groups, articulating their views effectively on the abduction issue and conducting effective campaigns to enlist the support of Japanese Diet members (especially LDP hardliners toward North Korea), media, and numerous Japanese voters for the purpose of pressuring the Koizumi government to stand up against North Korea on the abduction issue. Together with these sympathetic allies, they have been able to play an important role in shaping public opinion. In a sense, they constitute a major domestic constraint on the Koizumi government in dealing with North Korea.

Sixth, North Korea's confrontational policy and brinkmanship diplomacy in dealing with the nuclear issue have strengthened the negative perceptions of the Kim Jong-Il regime among the Japanese. At the same time, North Korea's saber-rattling behavior has inadvertently advanced the political agenda of Japanese conservatives for stronger Japanese defense preparedness and military capabilities. Because of the nuclear threat from North Korea, the Koizumi government has been able to enact several important pieces of legislation, including new war contingency laws and others relating to the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Furthermore, to cope with North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, Japan is beefing up its defense preparedness by deploying an advanced missile defense shield at the cost of \$7 billion by 2007 and orbiting two spy satellites. In addition, there is a growing demand among the Japanese voters that Japan amend its postwar Constitution, including Article 9, in order to make it possible for Japan to cope more effectively with its national security. Furthermore, North Korea's growing nuclear and missile threat has provided stronger incentives for Tokyo to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance system.

Seventh, insofar as the prospects for the normalization of Japanese-North Korean diplomatic relations are concerned, it will depend largely on whether or not North Korea honors its promises made in the joint statement and works out a road-map for the implementation of the general principles of settlement contained in the joint statement

adopted by the six-party talks in Beijing on September 19, 2005. If North Korea does so by working out a schedule with the U.S. and other powers for the implementation of the general principles of settlement, such a development will facilitate the peaceful resolution of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In addition, a breakthrough in the settlement of the nuclear issue may facilitate the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea and build momentum for finding a compromise on other thorny issues, such as the abduction issue. Conversely, if Pyongyang reneges on its promises made in the September 19th agreement and refuses to abandon its nuclear weapons program, it will be unrealistic to expect the resumption of normalization talks between Japan and North Korea. In view of the complicated nature of the issues involved, which are partly multilateral (i.e. nuclear) and partly bilateral (i.e. abduction), it is doubtful that Japan and North Korea will be able to settle the nuclear and abduction issues and normalize diplomatic relations before the expiration of Koizumi's tenure as the Prime Minister in September 2006 in spite of Koizumi's professed desire to do so.^{clii}

ⁱ For a detailed analysis, see Hong Nack Kim, "Japan and North Korea: Normalization Talks between Pyongyang and Tokyo," in Young Whan Kihl (ed.), *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), p. 120.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hong Nack Kim & Jack L. Hammersmith, "Japanese-North Korean Relations in the Post-KimIl-Sung Era," *Korea and World Affairs*, Winter 2000, p.618.

^{iv} Toshiaki Arai, *Nikkan. Nitcho Kankei no kadai* (Problems of Japanese-South Korean & Japanese-North Korean Relations) (Tokyo: Nitchu Shuppan, 2005), pp. 184-186.

^v *Ibid.*, pp. 182-184.

^{vi} Hitoshi Tanaka, "Taboo o yaburazu shite Nihon no shorai wa nai (No future for Japan without destroying taboo)," *Ronza*, November 2005, p. 154. See also, Soji Takasaki, *Kensho. Nitcho Kosho* (Verification: Japanese-North Korean Negotiations) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2004), p. 168.

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} Hitoshi Tanaka, "Watashi ga mita Koizumi gaiko 4-nenkan no shinjitsu (The truth about the four years of Koizumi diplomacy as I have witnessed)," *Gendai*, November 2005, p.40.

^{ix} *Ibid.*

^x Tanaka, *op. cit.* See also, Hitoshi Tanaka, "Koizumi hocho 'shikakenin' to yobarete (Being called as the 'fixer' for Koizumi's visit to North Korea)," *Bungei Shunju*, November 2005, p. 139.

^{xi} *Ibid.*

^{xii} *Facts on File*, August 8, 2002, p. 606.

^{xiii} *Japan Times*, August 27 & 31 and September 12, 2002.

^{xiv} *Asahi Shimbun*, August 25 & 27, 2002.

^{xv} Tsuneo Akaha, "Japan's Policy toward North Korea," in Tsuneo Akaha (ed.), *The Future of North Korea* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 80. See also Shinichi Kitaoka, "Sengo Nihon gaikoshi ni nokoru seiko de aru ([Koizumi's Pyongyang visit] is a success to be recorded in the postwar diplomatic history of Japan)," *Chuo Koron*, November 2002, p. 50.; and Masaru Sato, "Chugoku to Tanaka Hitoshi: Nihon gaiko no wana (China and Tanaka Hitoshi: a trap for Japan's diplomacy)," *Bungei Shunju*, June 2005, p.216.

- ^{xvi} North Korea's First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Suk-Ju reportedly made the request to Tanaka Hitoshi during the Tokyo-Pyongyang bilateral talks in Pyongyang in late August 2002 that Pyongyang would like Japan to act as an intermediary in promoting bilateral talks between Pyongyang and Washington. See *Asahi Shimbun*, August 27, 2005. See also Takasaki, *op. cit.*, pp 166 & 190-191.
- ^{xvii} *Asahi Shimbun*, September 18, 2002. See also *Japan Times*, September 18, 2002.
- ^{xviii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xix} *Ibid.*
- ^{xx} For a full text of the Japan-DPRK. Pyongyang Declaration, see the "Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration" (Tokyo: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 17, 2002).
- ^{xxi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxiii} *Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 20, 2002. See also, *Asahi Shimbun*, September 19, 2002.
- ^{xxiv} *Mainichi Shimbun*, September 23, 2002.
- ^{xxv} *Kyodo News International*, October 20, 2002.
- ^{xxvi} For a detailed analysis of Japanese printed media's reactions to the Pyongyang summit, see Takasaki, *op. cit.*, 177-183.
- ^{xxvii} For a detailed report on the fate of 13 abductees prepared by the Japanese investigation team, "Kitachosen ratchi jiken seifu hokokusho (Japanese government report on the abductions by North Korea)," *Asahi Shimbun*, October 3, 2002.
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- ^{xl} *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 30, 2002.
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- ^{xlv} Katsu Furukawa, "Japan's View of the Korea Crisis," *Monterey Institute of International Studies* (Monterey, California: March 2003), pp.2-3.
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- ^{lv} Takasaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

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- ^{lvii} *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2003.
- ^{lviii} *Ibid.*, May 13, 2003. See also, *Facts on File*, June 12, 2003, p.454.
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- ^{lxxxvii} *Xinhua News Agency*, "DPRK Slashes Japan's Foreign Exchange Bill," January 31, 2004.
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- ^{lxxxiv} *Ibid.*
- ^{lxxxv} *Ibid.*

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- ^{xcvi} Ibid.
- ^{xcvii} *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, May 23, 2004.
- ^{xcviii} *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 24, 2004.
- ^{xcix} *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, May 24 & 25 (evening edition), 2004. See also, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 23, 2004.
- ^c *Asahi Shimbun*, May 26, 2004.
- ^{ci} *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, June 15, 2004. See also, Kyodo News Service, “Japanese Parliament Enacts to Ban N. Korean Ships,” *JEN*, June 14, 2004.
- ^{cii} *Asahi Shimbun*, July 7, 2004.
- ^{ciii} Kyodo News Service, “Japan to give N. Korea 5.2 bil. Yen of Food, Medical Aid by Year-End,” *JEN*, August 3, 2004.
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- ^{cxvi} Ibid.
- ^{cxvii} Wada, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- ^{cxviii} Cyranoski, *op. cit.*
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