

Policy Forum 04-23A: Japan-North Korea Diplomatic Normalization and Northeast Asia Peace



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Japan-North Korea Diplomatic Normalization and Northeast Asia Peace

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By Wada Haruki

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I. Introduction

The following is Wada Haruki's analysis of the larger stakes in the recent Japan-North Korea negotiations. Setting off the emotional issues of the kidnapping of Japanese against the record of Japanese colonialism in Korea, Wada examines the prospects for negotiating an agreement that could become the basis for defusing the range of contentious issues that continue to swirl around a nuclear North Korea facing acute problems of starvation and isolated from its powerful neighbor and historic antagonist, Japan. Wada Haruki is Emeritus Professor of the University of Tokyo.

II. Essay by Wada Haruki

"Japan-North Korea Diplomatic Normalization and Northeast Asia Peace"
by Wada Haruki, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo, Japan

The Manifesto issued by Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) before the November 2003 general election, under the heading "to develop a foreign policy that met Japan's national interests," vowed to "resolve the issue of North Korean abductions of Japanese nationals." In an appended explanation the party declared its aim as "normalizing relations with North Korea by seeking resolution in three areas: abductions, nuclear weapons, and missiles." However, the main text ended by professing its intention to confront this problem by setting up a party headquarters to deal with the abductee issue and realize "the quick return of the abductee victims' family members."

On September 19, 2003 Abe Shinzo, delayed his plan to step down from his post as deputy chief cabinet secretary in order to convene a meeting of specialists on the kidnapping issue held at the prime minister's office. Here he reconfirmed the government's position that Japan would only open a new round of normalization discussions with North Korea after the family members of the kidnap victims were allowed to return to Japan. The Japanese government would for the time being reject any demands made by the North Koreans for reparation payments. Abe inserted into the party's Manifesto a milder version of this policy after he assumed his new position as LDP Secretary General, only to return to the former tone when he informed the repatriated Japanese abductees that normalization negotiations would not begin until North Korea agreed to return the family members. The LDP Manifesto contained not a hint of a suggestion for breaking the present impasse.

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), seeking to seize political power, pledged as item two in the diplomacy section of its Manifesto to "protect world peace centered on the United Nations." Concerning the abductee issue, it explained: "A rapid resolution of North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens is the most important issue from the standpoint of Japanese sovereignty and humanity. The DPJ will appeal to North Korea, as well as to the United Nations and world opinion for the prompt transfer to Japan of the victims' families and a full clarification of their abductions." The Manifesto supported resolving North Korean nuclear issues through the six-nation talks, and it linked this process to the formation of a regional trust-building organization. The document, however, refrained from making any reference to diplomatic normalization with North Korea. As a party that opposed the government's plan to dispatch Japanese self-defense troops to Iraq, one would expect the DPJ to put forth a more flexible and constructive alternative to the LDP's stalled policy toward North Korea. However, its Manifesto failed to distinguish itself from declarations made by the LDP. As a practical measure to break this impasse, the party could only offer the oft-heard suggestion that Japan employ international opinion. Perhaps realizing the shortcoming, the DPJ appended a vow just before the election to draft an amendment to halt financial remittances to

North Korea. Secretary General Abe, however, countered that the LDP had already completed a bill designed to address this very point.

The fact that these two Manifestos demonstrate little difference in North Korea policy, the biggest diplomatic issue that Japan faces, shows the stagnation of contemporary Japanese politics.

At this time the two abductee victims support groups, the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN) and the Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (AFVKN), distributed a questionnaire to all election candidates, to which roughly 84 percent responded. On the question of whether the candidates recognized kidnapping as an act of terrorism, 93 percent answered in the affirmative. Fifty-five percent agreed that stronger foreign currency legislation was needed to enforce economic sanctions that limited financial remittance and trade. Fifty-two percent of the respondents believed it necessary to enact new legislation to restrict particular ships from entering Japanese ports (Asahi shinbun November 4, 2003). Reflected in their responses was pressure felt by candidates as a result of receiving a questionnaire from two of the most powerful pressure groups in Japan. Over half of those who responded felt that Japan should punish North Korea with economic sanctions.

Questions regarding Japan's North Korean policy lingered after the general elections. Would the National Diet proceed with legal preparations to enforce economic sanctions, the formula that NARKN declared at its national convention would break the present impasse? Would Japan alone enforce economic sanctions against North Korea at a time when preparations were underway for a second round of six-nation discussions in December? And if Japan did impose sanctions, would North Korea capitulate? Japan's threats to impose sanctions on North Korea cannot be considered a positive contribution to Northeast Asian peace and stability.

The plan advanced in Fall 2002 by Abe Shinzo as deputy chief cabinet secretary -- to force North Korea into submission -- had after a year failed to produce any results towards resolving the abductee issue. At that time he predicted, "In North Korea there is no food or oil, whereas Japan has both of these products. North Korea will submit to Japan after it learns that it cannot survive the winter." North Korea survived Winter 2002 as well as Winter 2003. Would it return the family members of kidnapped Japanese out of consideration for Prime Minister Koizumi's situation? Could it strike a deal as the election approached? Such ideas were put forth but no progress was made.

A number of people proposed various "abductee solutions," yet none considered any new direction or approach to encourage resolution. What this discussion did form was a unified public consensus. The media linked its message to that of the political world, thus making it very difficult for anyone to deviate from the accepted voice. The foreign media provided the lone exception. University of California at Berkeley professor Steven Vogel, in an article titled "Don't let the abductee issue kidnap diplomacy," warned the Japanese government "not to let the abductee issue 'kidnap' its aim of strengthening East Asian peace and security" (Newsweek [Japanese edition], July 23, 2003). In the magazine's October 22 issue one writer wrote on the "pitfalls of abductee hysteria." This author argued: "It has been one year since the abductee victims returned home. Diplomacy is distorted by adoption of a position that continues to dwell on a solution centered solely on this issue." These positions differed dramatically from the views expressed by the Japanese domestic media.

Political figures and ordinary citizens are immobilized by a mindset preaching national unity. Consideration of alternative routes would perhaps have hastened the road to solution. Instead, Japan's stubborn determination to hold to the present course delayed all progress. The prediction that concluded the Newsweek article -- "Japan would greet October 15 again without any advancement toward solution" -- thus proved prophetic. How did we enter this blind alley that brought this social atmosphere and public opinion? What problems do we need to address?

Conventional Wisdoms

The American magazine that characterized Japanese public opinion as in a state of "abductee hysteria" drew from a number of elements. Of prominent importance was the moment when suspicions of abduction became incidents of abduction. The shock felt from learning that North Korea actually did kidnap Japanese citizens disseminated a strong emotion of anger against the country throughout the Japanese population. The abductee families experienced shock and hopelessness upon learning that only five of the thirteen Japanese abductees had survived. Japanese emotions naturally swelled upon witnessing their reactions. What the Japanese people needed from politicians and intellectuals was a responsible voice to help ease the pain and give vent to anger while pursuing a rational diplomatic response.

Herein lies a second factor -- the rightwing media. In advancing their anti-North Korean campaign, one that it soon tied to national sentiments, weekly magazines such as *Shukan bunshun*, which invariably criticized North Korea and opposed the negotiations leading to Japan-North Korea diplomatic normalization, joined monthly magazines such as *Shokun!* (published by *Bungei shunshu*) and *Seiron* (published by the *Sankei shinbun* company) in their attack on the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister's office, and the "pro-North Korean faction."

The leaders of this movement, NARKN represented by Sato Katsumi, and AFVKN represented by Hirosawa Katsuei, comprised a third element. These groups were shocked by both the September 2002 Koizumi-Kim summit held in Pyongyang and the Pyongyang Declaration that the two leaders signed. They immediately sought to reclaim their influence over North Korean policy matters. This "third element" accused the government of failing to examine the death reports on the eight deceased abductees, and insisted that they may still be alive. They further attacked Tanaka Hitoshi, the Foreign Ministry official who conducted the negotiations that led to Koizumi's eventual visit to Pyongyang. These two groups wielded a heavy influence over the Diet, political parties, and the mass media.

A fourth element, a mass media shocked by the realization that the hitherto unsubstantiated suspicions of North Korea kidnappings were indeed fact, bowed to criticism over their lackluster reportage of the issue to date. The media forfeited control of the story's coverage to NARKN, thus relinquishing its independent position. NHK television news and the "wide shows" highlighted shots of the repatriated abductee victims and their family members who remained in North Korea. The wide shows also devoted time slots to various revelations about North Korea.

The first conventional wisdom born from this synergistic element ignored North Korean claims regarding Japan's colonial occupation by presenting the abduction issue as the totality of the Japan-North Korea relationship. Had these voices forgotten their country's past role as assailant? Japan had become the sole victim in its relations with North Korea.

This feeling surfaced in a September 2002 editorial authored by Kamiya Fuji who declared that since colonial rule from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century was "widely recognized as a merit to be pursued by advanced countries," it was wrong to judge this period by contemporary standards. He continued: "It is appropriate for Japan to reflect (*hansei*) and offer compensation (*shai*) to North Korea for the colonization of the Korean peninsula." However, a "clear qualitative difference must be made between the inappropriateness of [Japanese colonialism] and the necessary pursuit of the international crimes of kidnappings and terrorism." (*Asahi shinbun*, September 21, 2002, evening edition). For Kamiya, kidnapping was far more reprehensible and criminal than colonial occupation.

Absent from the Japanese media's reportage since the Koizumi-Kim Summit is mention of the

historical relationship between Japan and North Korea. The magazine Aera did offer one such article, titled "An enduring relationship of estranged friendship: war disruption and control in Japan-North Korea modern history" and authored by Taoka Shunji in a special edition dedicated to "North Korea's transfiguration" that it published on September 17, the night before the summit. No such articles have appeared since.

This view differs profoundly from the convictions of the leading proponents of this campaign. Opposed to Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro's 1992 statement of apology to Korea, NARKN chairman Sato Katsumi formed a national committee around the belief that "Japan is not an invading country" [Nihon wa shinryaku kuni dewa nai]. In his March 2002 book, *Why is Japanese foreign policy toward the Korean Peninsula weak?* Sato directly criticized Tanaka Hitoshi's tenure as head of the Northeast Asia Bureau for admitting that "in the past Japan made mistakes." Araki Kazuhiro, then the National Council's First Secretary General and subsequently Special Representative for Investigations of Missing People, parroted the words of the Korean Kim Wan Seop's In defense of the pro-Japanese that Araki translated, by claiming that Japan's colonial occupation contributed to Korean welfare.

Abe Shinzo was the Deputy Secretary General of the "Diet Members League for Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the War's End" when the League blocked the Diet Resolution of Remorse and Apology drafted in 1995 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end. The Diet League's Chairman Okuno Seisuke and Secretary General Itagaki Tadashi (son of Itagaki Seishiro, prominent military figure in the Japanese invasion and occupation of Manchuria from 1931) reasoned that the previous war was "one fought for Japan's survival and prosperity as well as for Asian peaceful liberation." He opposed any reflection or compensation by Japan. Abe opposed the Diet resolution and did not participate in the vote held at the plenary session. There is also little doubt that he opposed Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi's views on this matter. In 1997 Abe formed the "Association of Young Diet Members Concerned with Japan's Prospects and History Education". This group declared that there was no comfort women issue. Thus, not only was Kono Yohei's August 1993 statement calling for reflection and compensation mistaken, but the comfort women issue should be stricken from school textbooks. Later, NARKN chairman Nakagawa Shoichi served as the Association's chairman, and Abe its secretary general.

To hold that it is unnecessary to reflect upon, or compensate, Koreans for the pain and losses suffered during Japan's period of colonial rule is to oppose the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration. It is also to obstruct Japan's settlement for the colonial period. Many statements have been made to the effect that the abductee issue is the only outstanding issue that requires the two states' attention, thus rejecting the importance of coming to terms with the colonial epoch. It was this movement that rejected a previously accepted resolution drafted to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end; such a position will never gain international acceptance.

A second conventional wisdom maintains that Japan-North Korea normalization is unnecessary, either to protect Japanese interests or to make the North Koreans behave. Driven by its desire for a shortcut to normalization, North Korea is said to have admitted to the pending abductee and spy ship issues by offering apology and vowing never to repeat these unfortunate incidents. In the meantime, Japan seems to have forgotten about normalization.

Slander and attacks directed toward those who had supported and worked toward realizing Japan-North Korea normalization succeeded in casting normalization in negative terms. This negative campaign began in the weekly magazines. An article that appeared in the October 3, 2002 issue of *Shukan Bunshun*, titled "To the politicians, bureaucrats, and analysts who left the eight to die: apologize for every single death attributable to your great crime" accused those who turned their backs on the abductee issue of "trampling on the desperate appeals of the families." The article

directly named Anami Koreshige and Yokota Kunihiro of the Foreign Ministry, Kanemaru Shin, Kato Koichi, Nonaka Hiromu, and Nakayama Masaki of the LDP, Kan Naoki, Ishii Hajime, and Hatoyama Yukio of the DPJ, Social Democratic Party (SDP) leader Doi Takako, as well as Yoshida Yasuhiko, and Wada Haruki. This became the prototype. Bungei Shinju's November issue, which appeared on the newsstands in October, carried an article by Sankei shinbun reporter Ishii Hideo on the "New pro-North Korean intellectuals: A record of non-reflective reckless statements." Ishii wrote: "It is not just that the Japanese government lacks a policy; it is also that the politicians, intellectuals, and newspapers have been dragging their feet." Specifically named in his article were Doi Takako, Fuwa Tetsuzo, Nakayama Masaki, as well as Yoshida Yasuhiko, myself, and the Asahi shinbun.

The December issue of Shokun! featured Inagaki Takeshi's "The hour of death for the 'North Korean family'" in a special edition devoted to "A postwar history of exorcizing devils". The author named Doi Takako and others as "Social Democratic Party representatives guilty of traitorous expressions"; he also accused Nonaka Hiromu, Kato Koichi, Nakayama Masaki, and other LDP members of "North Korean favoritism." Among intellectuals he mentioned Yoshida Yasuhiko and myself, along with Sekai Chief Editor Okamoto Atsushi, author Oda Makoto, and members of Sekai's editorial staff. An article of similar tone penned by former Japan Defense University professor Kakitani Isao appeared in the December issue of Seiron under the title "'A collector's item': The adoration of '(North) Korean flirts' -- a collection of their ingratiating remarks." This article, as well, named many of those mentioned above.

Sato Katsumi's *The Abductee Families: Their Battle with Kim Jong Il* that also came out that December criticized Kanemaru Shin, Watanabe Michio, Kato Koichi, Nonaka Hiromu, Nakayama Masaki, and others as "LDP politicians who had been targeted by Chosen Soren," the pro-North Korean group of Japan-based Koreans. The book also criticized many of the above political figures, along with Doi Takako, Fuwa Tetsuzo, Yasue Ryosuke, Yoshida Yasuhiko, and myself as "those who have recorded comments that protected North Korea." Sato wrote, political figures "must consider deeply the necessity of this protection. Had they been firm on their political principles, the abductee issue would have been resolved much faster."

Such people determined that those who had devoted energy to opening roads to Japan-North Korea diplomatic engagement had flattered North Korea and thus were to be held responsible for delaying resolution of the abductee issue. This aroused the anger of the Japanese people and besmirched the prestige of the people targeted. The SDP apologized and froze its relations with the North Korean Labor Party. Doi Takako lost her seat to an LDP prefectural assembly candidate who built his campaign around the abductee issue, and was forced to resign as party chairperson. The LDP's Nonaka Hiromu also came under attack. Ultrarightists harassed him by circling his house in cars blaring out their criticisms from megaphones. Nakayama Masaki resigned his position as chair of the Japan-North Korea legislative Friendship Association, and Nonaka Hiromu, who served as its chief officer, halted all of the organization's activities. This left NARKN to carry out all of the North Korea-related activities as Nonaka and Nakayama retired from politics.

Beyond the Rhetoric of Slander and Malice

I also was targeted for criticism. These criticisms repeatedly cited remarks that I made in a two-part essay that appeared in the January and February 2001 issues of Sekai titled "An investigation of the so-called Japanese kidnap cases." This criticism specifically mentioned my argument that insufficient proof existed in the Yokota Megumi case to warrant its inclusion as an abductee item in diplomatic negotiations. I described the case as "one of the biggest pending issues" that confronted North Korea-Japan relations, and said that it must be examined as a case of "suspicion" if Japan is to "seek

solution" to the "abductee suspicion" issue. If proof is found, then "the issue must be raised accordingly. The mode of presenting these demands must also be determined and means for reaching solution realistically pursued within the context of Japan's relations with North Korea." According to investigative reports available at the time, Yokota's case, one of seven suspected cases involving ten people, was built on testimony provided by An Myeong Jin that was believed to be unreliable. I wrote, "there is merely suspicion that she has been kidnapped," and thus Japan must negotiate her case as a missing person. Nowhere did I say that "she was not a victim of abduction." Regarding the disappearances of the three young couples, I wrote: "because An Myeong Jin's testimony wavered, there is no direct basis to consider them as abduction cases." Thus, there was no other way than to negotiate while classifying these three couples as missing persons.

Hara Tadaaki's case was different, as Sin Gwan Su had directly admitted to this kidnapping. I wrote that since "Sin's testimony and material evidence provided direct evidence, Hara's case can be treated as an abduction." As for Kume Hiroshi's case, "one Japan-based Korean testifying to having led him to the beach," suggests strong evidence. But since the Japanese police did not make it a case, "we are left with no recourse than to treat this as a missing person case." Concerning Yi Un Hae (Japanese name Taguchi Yaeko), if suspicions ever become reality then finding solutions to her case must be given priority. As nothing developed from An Myeong Jin's testimony, even though thirteen abductee victims have now been confirmed, my doubts regarding his reliability remain unchanged to this day.

Ishii Hideo commented on my article by saying "Wada has investigated this issue as a counsel (bengoin) for North Korea from the beginning." Inagaki Takashi added, "that guy's weak-headed but thick-skinned." The most offensive criticism hurled at Sekai and myself came around the end of November in Shigemura Toshimitsu's Latest North Korean Data Book. The author accused of "traitor-like activity" those political figures who refused to declare that normalization would only bear fruit after the abductee issue was resolved. Shigemura further stipulated that he "could not accept" those who declared "there is not an abductee problem." He continued: "Representative of this group is Tokyo University professor emeritus Wada Haruki and the magazine Sekai put out by Iwanami Shoten." He then cited my February 2001 article where I allegedly stated "there are no kidnap victims." Furthermore, he continued, "Sekai and the professor emeritus have closed their eyes to the reality that North Korea is an 'industrial state' with a huge industrial capacity." Finally Ishii Hideo made even more ridiculous accusations: "intellectuals and researchers like Tokyo University professor emeritus Wada Haruki who support North Korean declarations contend that 'there are no abductee victims,' that 'it was the South that started the Korean War,' and that while in North Korea there is no freedom, there is enough food to eat. We now know that such statements are unequivocally incorrect."

On January 6, 2003 I sent a letter of protest asking Shigemura to inform me where he had read my saying that there were "no kidnap victims." Kodansha, after conferring with Shigemura, evaded the issue by responding with something less than a rebuttal: they asked whether or not I had said, "the only option was to negotiate their cases as missing persons." Shigemura's most absurd criticism concerned my alleged position on the Korean War, that it was the South that had initiated the fighting. Could he not at least have paid me the simple courtesy of examining the table of contents of either of my two books on this subject? His response to my request for clarification as to where I had said that North Koreans had no freedom but plenty to eat totally avoided responsibility by explaining that he had used the phrase "scholars like 'professor emeritus Wada Haruki' to present his main idea that 'scholars and researchers support North Korea.'" His publisher, Kodansha, in the end determined the phrase "scholars like professor emeritus Wada Haruki" to be problematic and deleted it from the third printing of the book. Where is the difficulty in understanding this phrase? More probable was that Shigehara proposed the correction and the publishing company accepted

his suggestion. In other words, when it comes to Wada, anything can be said. This, however, is not only my problem but demonstrates the sad state of contemporary debate rife with demagogery.

The attack directed at proponents of reform, normalization, and diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea was unreasonable. Yes, such people were not in favor of tough negotiations to resolve the abducted Japanese issue. Some in this group believed the possibility of success under such a policy to be remote. The North Korean government's confession and apology at the September 17 summit for the first time brought the two sides together over the idea of quickly establishing diplomatic normalization. If the process toward normalization had progressed, so would the solution to the abductee issue. On the other hand, those who had long before treated suspicions of abduction as fact argued that solution to this issue would only come after the Kim Jong Il regime was toppled, and that diplomatic normalization was not possible beforehand. They never entertained ideas such as those put forth in the September 17 Pyongyang Declaration. Naturally, as before, resolution of the abductee issue will come only within the advancement of Japan-North Korea diplomatic relations.

A third conventional wisdom is anti-North Korean rhetoric. Led by the television wide shows, the most frequent message that Japan's commercial television stations offer is that North Korea is simply an awful country, a place where you can see many starving children. The scene often shown is of North Koreans fleeing north into China in search of food. These shows highlight the miserable life endured by those in North Korean asylums. "Happiness Brigade" (yorokobi gumi, Kim Jong Il's detachments of young women entertainers) scenes from North Korean television -- news narrations, military parades, and children's exercise programs -- are other images presented in a scornful way by the Japanese media. Two images -- the North Korean leader and starving children -- are used to complete this montage. This reinforces the idea that the North Korean state is so tyrannically inhumane, so abnormal as to be comical. It is a country so vastly different from Japan as to be incomprehensible. The comments made by Japanese television commentators reviewing these scenes reveal bewilderment: can such a country be allowed to exist in this day and age?

One line used by analyst Fukuda Kazuya in an advertisement carried in the October 26, 2003 issue of the Mainichi shinbun regarding sales of the publication A comic book introduction to Kim Jong Il that sold 500,000 copies is characteristic: The analyst wrote, "the abnormality of the North Korean state, along with its mystique, is beyond the imagination of the gentle Japanese people. It is not an overstatement to say that the peculiar structure created by the Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il father-son combination is beyond comprehension. In other words, for Japanese, who enter a relationship guided by the premise that the other party maintains similar feelings of the good will and common sense needed to engage in dialogue and negotiation, North Korea is an adversary with no parallel."

Former U.S president Ronald Reagan began a new cold war by labeling the former Soviet Union the "evil empire." We are fortunate that the Soviet-U.S. Cold War did not end in a hot nuclear war. The people of South Korea over the years angered their northern neighbors by referring to them as "northern devils." They have to understand that they share the same ethnic roots as the North Koreans who harbor a deep rage. Depicting this people as incomprehensible savages is to repeat the tragic sentiment of "as discussion is useless, let's just do away with them." Japan's anti-North Korean campaign has advanced to within mere steps of this pathological disposition.

If the Japanese support the sudden toppling of the Kim Jong Il administration and America starts dropping bombs on Pyongyang, then South Korea and Japan will also become battlegrounds, and the family members of the kidnap victims, along with Kim Hye Jon, could all be sacrificed. Getting beyond the "discussion is useless, let's just do away with them" psychology requires thoughtful consideration of reason and history, as well as careful planning to break through the present impasse and create systems for proceeding. Have we forgotten that it was but a half-century ago in

its battle against the American forces that Japan called for "a hundred million glorious deaths" and for absolute faith in the emperor to the end? In 1998 I wrote in North Korea: the present situation of the partisan that if Japanese recall the situation of their country at the time of the Second World War, we can best comprehend the puzzles that confront the North Korean state today. I maintain this still.

Repatriated Abductees and the Voices of Reason

To many the abductee issue is the only issue. They forget the period of colonial occupation and feel no urgency to work toward Japan-North Korea diplomatic normalization. North Korea as a country is beyond imagination and understanding, and thus it is not possible to engage its people in dialogue. Maintaining this disposition renders negotiating the abductee victims' cases impossible.

Those most distanced from public opinion are the victims themselves. The responses by the five repatriated Japanese have been extremely calm. Chimura Yasushi's observations, recorded on the occasion of the first anniversary of his repatriation and carried in the Asahi shinbun on October 15, 2003, are indicative of this temperament. First Chimura acknowledged that there were a rather large number of people who have faced similar circumstances in Japan and Korea. "In the world, there are many unfortunate people living apart from family members, including parents and children, without knowing whether they are dead or alive. One example close to home is Japan's Korean population. Among them are those who through various circumstances came to Japan on their own. Others remain here as victims of the past war. There are many such unfortunate people on the Korean peninsula as well, who have been separated from their family since the Korean War and have no knowledge of the whereabouts of their loved ones. The one wish that these victimized people hold is to once again be reunited with their families."

Chimura also accurately placed his kidnapping within the context of a hostile and abnormal Japan-North Korea relationship. He wrote: "From the beginning I would contemplate why North Korea had committed these kidnappings. I concluded one reason to be the continuation of, and inability to resolve, its hostile relations with Japan. In this way, the kidnappings could be understood as a continuation and a cost of the war."

In his notes, Chimura wrote of his feelings as he stood on Kohama beach, a location where many of the Japanese had been kidnapped, for an NHK special which aired on September 17, 2003: "A feeling of hatred that cannot be expressed in words welled up inside of me." Here is a person who suffered: "There was no way that I can retrieve these twenty-four years of emptiness." This rational realization is one that deserves the attention of every single Japanese.

Hasuike Kaoru hesitated to define the kidnappings as a form of terrorism, and refused to participate in NARKN's large assembly meeting. He stated in the September 17th NHK special, "I will not attend a censure assembly that interprets the kidnappings as terrorist activity, and I cannot criticize the country where my child resides." These people only hope that Japan and North Korean differences are quickly resolved so that they can be reunited with their children.

Toward Resolution

If the present stance taken by public opinion is mistaken, then what are we to do? We must confront the issue and then contemplate the most suitable means for solution. What are the issues? From Japan's standpoint, the main topic is establishing diplomatic relations to normalize the Japan-North

Korea bilateral relationship. It is unforgivable for Japan, a state that enjoys diplomatic relations with just about every country on earth, to allow this issue to prevent it from coming to terms with its neighbor. The abductee issue must be addressed within this larger framework, as one of a number of important problems. The solution lies within the important gains agreed upon in the Pyongyang Declaration that the two states signed at the September 2002 Japan-North Korea Summit.

For the Northeast Asian region the primary topic is persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programs. These weapons, after all, potentially invite misfortune for all of the region's inhabitants. This goal can be realized by removing the threat felt by the North Koreans -- first by the United States assuring that it will not attack, and second by encouraging North Korea to pledge not to attack its neighbors. In other words, all states of the region must agree to a no-war declaration.

These two goals are critical, and they can be reached simultaneously. It is imperative that negotiations strive to reach two ends: the conclusion of both an agreement at the six-nation talks and a Japan-North Korea treaty. The latter agreement must resolve the abductee issue and contain an apology by Japan for the suffering and loss that the Korean people endured during the period of colonial rule. It should also specify the figure and content that Japan's economic cooperation will assume. It is impossible that these two outstanding issues can be resolved separately. Thus, four items -- the abductee issue, colonial occupation claims, the nuclear problem, and regional security -- comprise a package to be settled together. It is only under this condition that solution is possible.

The September 2002 Japan-North Korea Summit produced dramatic diplomatic results that addressed fifty-plus years of neglected settlement of the colonial period, and sought a solution to the twin problems of the abductee and the spy ship issues to end hostile relations. These were the first signs of progress since negotiations began in 1991. The negotiations gaining the repatriation of the five surviving abductees was in and of itself a tremendous breakthrough. It is clear that this success resulted from the mutual trust developed during the secret contacts that took place over the ten months that preceded the summit. Negotiations are not to be conducted between winners and losers, or between victims and victimizers, but rather between two equal parties who have long shared antagonistic attitudes toward the other. Consequently, unless mutual trust is nurtured, negotiations will not develop; nor will they progress.

I have long believed that if progress were to be made between Japan and North Korea following the September 17 breakthrough it would have to be based on four principles: 1) trust-building measures, 2) honoring promises, 3) refraining from mutual abuse but maintaining respect for each other's pride, and 4) cultivating a spirit of agreement and reconciliation. With this in mind, Secretary General Abe Shinzo's summary of the government's plan, to make permanent the temporary visits of the five abductees, constitutes a breach of promise by the Foreign Ministry.

Hasuike Kaoru's telephone call to Nakayama the morning that the government decided not to return the abductees stating his intention to remain in Japan is well known. Others held different aspirations. Soga Hitomi, appearing on the October 15 NHK Special, admitted that she had planned to return to Pyongyang to pack her belongings thinking that Abe Shinzo and Cabinet Secretary Nakayama Kyoko, adviser to abductee affairs, would wait. Upon hearing the government's decision she muttered, "I guess it cannot be helped." Chimura Yasushi, as well, entered in his notes: "In the end it was the Japanese government that determined we would stay when it declared that 'Japan will not return the temporary repatriated abductees'" (Asahi shinbun, October 15, 2003). Clearly the Japanese government's decision not to allow the abductees to return to North Korea ignored the wishes of at least three of the five.

With the Japanese government's unconditional demand that the family members of the five abductees be allowed to come to Japan, it lost all North Korean trust. The North Korean side insisted

that Japan let the five abductees return to Pyongyang to discuss the situation with their children. Since then it has repeatedly provoked the Japanese, even on one occasion calling them "Japs" at a United Nations session. North Korea also objected to Japan's inclusion in the six-nation discussions.

To find a way out of this impasse, Japan must stop issuing ultimatums. After the Japanese government had made its decision, the five abductees themselves decided to remain permanently in Japan. Therefore, the breach of promise is regrettable, but since the five have made up their minds to stay, the most important thing now is to negotiate to try to get North Korea's agreement to this. If North Korea was to say that it is a pity that the promise was broken, but if the five have made up their minds then it will accept that fact and they can come back temporarily to Pyongyang for discussions with their children and to clear up their apartments, then negotiations between the two states could be resumed. Getting to this point first requires restarting inter-state negotiations.

Bringing the eight family members living in Pyongyang to Japan requires the Japanese government to make a policy change in favor of dialogue with North Korea. These eight include Chimura Yasushi's three children (15, 20, and 21 years), the Hasuike family's two children (18 and 21 years), Soga Hitomi's husband (the American Charles Robert Jenkins) and their two children (18 and 20 years). The children who have reached adulthood generally are different in character from their parents. The parents, with the exception of Jenkins, are Japanese victims of kidnappings, a fact that the children of Chimura Yasushi and the Hasuikes are not even aware of. These five children have been raised as North Koreans. They have been infused with a sense of belonging to the Kim Jong Il system. Parent-child sentiments are natural emotions but, as was the case in the Soviet Union, the education system places priority on state loyalty rather than such familial sentiments.

The feelings of the children must take first priority, with care taken so that they do not experience emotional pain; so that they desire to come to Japan; so that they can make the transition and find a home within Japanese society. It is toward this preparation that the families and government should be devoting efforts. At any rate, there is no need to hurry now. Proceeding gradually will bring about the quickest reunion between parents and children.

Soga Hitomi will remain apart from her husband if she remains in Japan as he could face court martial on AWOL charges if he leaves North Korea. She is also deeply concerned about her mother, whom she had not seen since being abducted in August 1978. At the same time, she also has a burning desire to reunite with her family in Pyongyang. Soga's predicament requires a solution that would allow her to travel back and forth between Japan and North Korea.

Progress on additional issues, including information on the eight abductees reported dead, the case of Kume Yutaka, and more information on Soga Hitomi's mother will only be advanced by renewed discussions between the two countries. A great number of points have been raised that need to be addressed. The report that the North Korean government issued to the Japanese was hurriedly put together. Many documents pertaining to the deceased may have been destroyed. The information offered was thus sloppily presented. North Korea must submit a report that explains just what it knows, while admitting what it does not know.

As for Kim Hye Jon, it is necessary that she visit with her grandparents so that Yokota Megumi's father can clarify the facts of his daughter's death. If closure is being sought then the abductees should not fear visiting Pyongyang. The North Korean government may use this visit for political purposes. However, the Japanese should be able to block any negative influence that may arise from this propaganda. There is also the issue of punishment for crime. Sin Gwan Su, the North Korea national who allegedly kidnapped Hara Tadaaki, brought him to North Korea, and then assumed his identity in Japan (and was later decorated by Kim Jong Il), represents one possible example of criminal behavior. There are no doubt other cases that require punishment.

Compensation to be paid to the abductees constitutes yet another unresolved issue. Though North Korea has firmly stated its opposition, the Japanese government must make demands and convince North Korea of the necessity for payment. It is, of course, only logical that the Japanese offer similar compensation to surviving comfort women, as well. There remain 200 recognized comfort women residing in North Korea today. As the Japanese government created the Asian Woman's Fund to deliver national compensation to South Korean victims, it must create a similar organization to compensate North Korean victims. To South Korean comfort women it paid the equivalent of five million yen to each victim. Even if Japan does not recognize North Korea, it should work with the state to resolve the issue of comfort women compensation. Only then can Japan logically address the issue of compensation to be paid to the abductees.

A final issue involves information on the 360 "specified missing people." The logic is that if there were 15 abduction cases to which North Korea admitted, there remains the possibility that other cases exist too. It is, however, not permissible to make demands on a state for the return of people whom Japanese claim to have been kidnapped unless proof can be found. It is permissible for the Japanese government to hand over a list of the missing people while the investigation continues. This issue must be tenaciously pressed even after diplomatic normalization is realized.

An entirely new situation unfolds once the Japanese government establishes an embassy in Pyongyang following Japan-North Korea diplomatic normalization. Naturally the investigation and repatriation of Japanese women married to North Korean nationals comes to mind as a topic for diplomatic resolution. Family visits by former Japan-based Koreans who left family behind when they migrated to North Korea also becomes possible. If the Japanese government became their guarantor, the living conditions of these peoples would greatly improve. Grappling with these issues, including the whereabouts of the "specified missing peoples," requires that the two states forge diplomatic relations. Political analyst, Rin T'ak Nam, whose daughter is listed among these missing people, proposes that the two states establish diplomatic relations "based on a feeling of respect for human rights to encourage human exchanges on both sides" (Mainichi shinbun, October 12, 2003). This is an important proposition.

Once negotiations for diplomatic normalization are resumed, issues such as the settlement of colonial occupation and economic assistance join the abduction issue on the agenda, rather than simply being embedded in the opening statements. If Japan and North Korea sign a diplomatic treaty at the time that settlement is reached at the six-nation talks, the Japanese can guide these talks to success. If the six-nation talks lead to agreement, and the heads of state of the United States, North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia convene to sign the agreement, they could guarantee the implementation of the agreement by agreeing to reconvene after one year. At this time it would become possible for an ANEAN (Association of Northeast Asian Nations) meeting to be held. In this way the idea presented in the DPJ Manifesto calling for the formation of a regional trust-forming organization could finally be realized.

(Translation by Mark Caprio)

III. Nautilus Invites Your Responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org . Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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