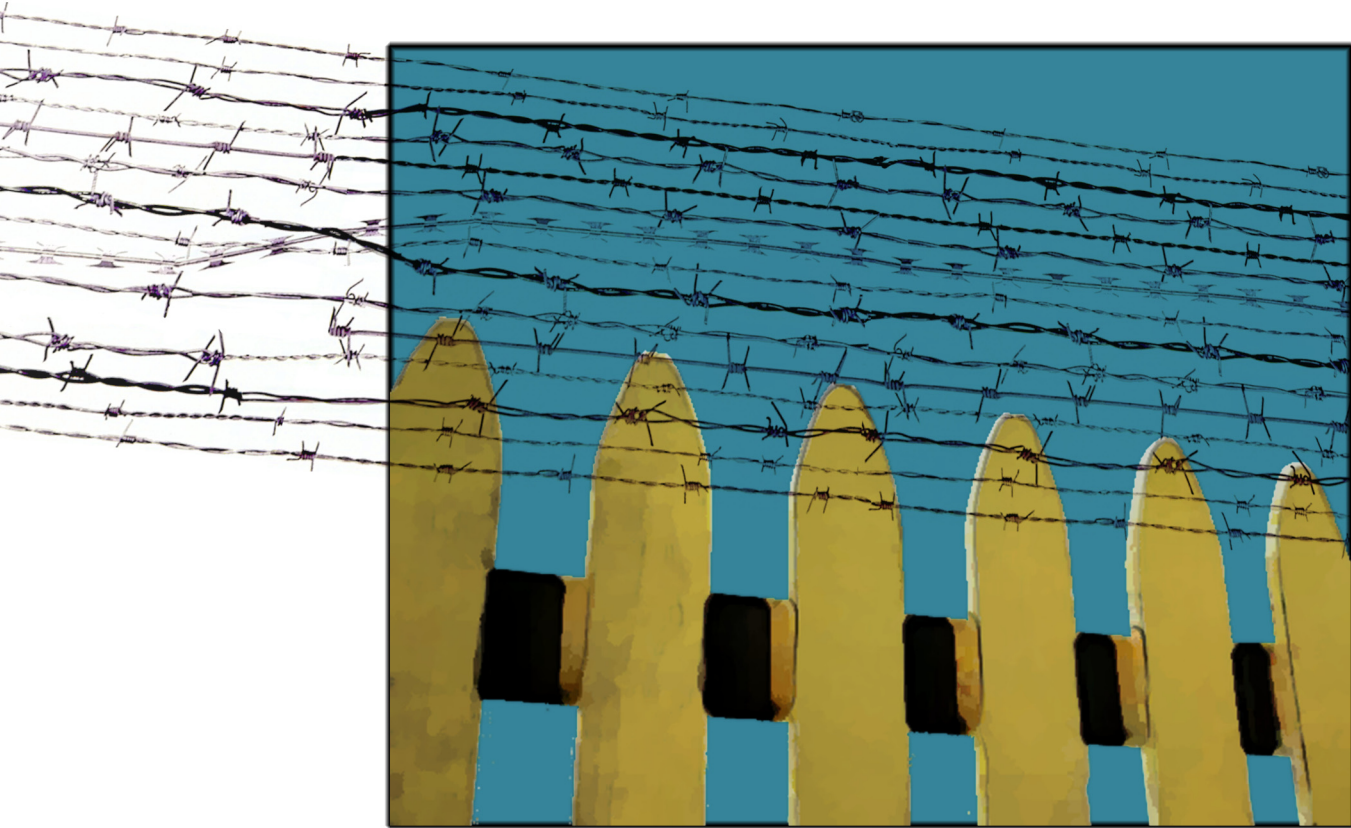


# Political Fences & Bad Neighbors

North Korea Policy Making  
in Japan & Implications for  
the United States



June 2006

A Project Report by  
The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis  
James L. Schoff



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# Introduction and Acknowledgements

In September 2005, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) began a study of recent trends concerning Japan-North Korea relations and the mechanics of Japanese foreign-policy making toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea). The goal of the study was to enhance U.S. policy makers' understanding of the current and future political dynamics in Japan on the North Korean question, in part by closely examining the underlying trends related to Japanese public opinion toward North Korea, to the changing personalities and policy-making habits and structures in the Japanese government, and to ways that the media and policy pressure groups influence the North Korea debate in Japan. This report describes the findings of the project's research and interviews, and it seeks to identify the determining factors behind Japan's evolving North Korea policy and to assess their implications for U.S. policy makers in the near and medium term.

The basic approach that Japan and the United States currently employ toward North Korea was articulated at a summit meeting in Crawford, Texas, between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro on May 23, 2003. This was the first bilateral summit meeting since the outbreak of the second North Korean nuclear crisis in October 2002, and the agreed upon approach can be summarized as an application of "dialogue and pressure...to achieve a peaceful solution" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2003). The calibration of dialogue and pressure has fluctuated from time to time, and it is not necessarily coordinated explicitly by the two countries, but the range in terms of how both countries have implemented dialogue and pressure has been quite narrow in the last three years. There have been periods when the pendulum swings one way or the other, but the swings are not wide or quick, and the allies have not moved perceptibly in opposite directions since the Crawford summit.

The solidarity between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea), however, has been steadily weakening, and this has constrained Washington's policy options regarding North Korea's nuclear programs. The administration of ROK President Roh Moo-hyun has been reluctant to consider any hard-line tactics, at times even working to deflect U.S. pressure. As a result, policy coordi-

nation with Japan is increasingly important for the United States, and the course of the Japan-DPRK relationship will influence near-term U.S. strategy and tactics.

If the six-party process remains unproductive, the United States will eventually have to make a strategic decision about if and how it wants to try to break the stalemate, and, regardless of the choice it makes, strong support from Japan will be critical to success. Broadly speaking, U.S. policy makers can either seek to apply greater economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea, or they can pursue a more conciliatory approach. The first option will be difficult without support from China and South Korea, but it could yield some results if Japan enthusiastically backs a hard-line policy. An aggressive U.S. strategy would fall apart, however, if support from Japan or the Japanese public wavered; Washington has been surprised before by fluctuating or conflicting policy signals in Tokyo. Conversely, the second strategic option could create serious problems for the U.S.-Japan alliance if anti-DPRK sentiment runs much deeper in Tokyo than Washington perceives, or if key Japanese policy makers are making political calculations based on a continued adversarial relationship with Pyongyang. Some in Japan worry that a multilateral deal with North Korea covering only nuclear programs will diminish Tokyo's leverage over Pyongyang regarding its own bilateral priorities.

Of course, a third option is to stay within the current, narrow range of dialogue and pressure policies, but this is a passive approach that essentially accepts a nuclear North Korea over at least the medium term (five to fifteen years) and ultimately relies on hope that incremental measures over time will yield results, or that some other externality will lead to positive developments (and that nothing terrible will happen in the meantime). Each of these three approaches (dramatically stepped-up pressure, a noticeable compromise in dialogue, or maintaining the status quo) carries with it various risks and possible advantages. In addition, the potential effectiveness of any policy will depend, at least in part and perhaps significantly, on U.S.-Japan cooperation, and how well that process of cooperation unfolds could have a strong impact on the overall health of the bilateral alliance, depending on how each partner perceives the political and

security-related stakes involved. Japan's present, relatively poor relationships with South Korea and China are another important factor to consider in all of this. Moreover, if a nuclear North Korea remains a reality in the medium term, then the United States and Japan, as the two countries with the highest threat perceptions vis-à-vis North Korea, will likely employ a variety of enhanced defensive measures to protect themselves during this time, which would open up new issues with regard to policy coordination and political/bureaucratic communication.

The IFPA research team began the study by carrying out an intensive survey and review of Japanese policy literature and government reports related to North Korea, the abduction issue, the six-party talks, U.S.-Japan relations in this context, and the future of Japan's foreign policy regarding the Korean Peninsula. We looked first at what the relevant ministries and affiliated think tanks' white papers and reports had to say on these topics since the first Koizumi visit to Pyongyang in 2002, as well as at political party reports and manifestos. The team also surveyed newspaper articles and editorials in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, other policy periodicals such as *Sekai*, *Chuo Koron*, and *Gaiko Forum*, and more popular weekly magazines such as *Bungei Shunju*, *Shukan Kinyobi*, and *Shokun!*, along with various books, all in an effort to shed light on the patterns of argument and then to link those arguments back to individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations. This helped us to develop further our working hypothesis of how Japan's policy community is aligned on the issue and to assess the relative strength of the different factions. General public opinion surveys were included in the study, as well as additional background research on trade and investment trends.

The centerpiece of the project was a series of one-on-one and group interviews in Japan and the United States regarding the above-mentioned issues. Interviewees included influential leaders in Japan from the Diet, the Foreign Ministry, the Cabinet Secretariat, the Defense Agency, military services, universities, think tanks, the business community, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), special interest groups, and journalists. Similar interviews were carried out in the United States with specialists from Congress, the State Department, the Defense Department, the National Security Council, NGOs, and think tanks. These interviews were not for attribution, and many individuals preferred not to be mentioned at all, but IFPA is extremely grateful to all of them for lending their time, opinions, and insights to this study, among them Abe Masami, Akiyama Nobumasa, Victor Cha, Fukukawa Shinji, Thomas Gibbons, Michael Green, Hiwa-

tari Yumi, Ina Hisayoshi, Ishozaki Atsuhito, Ito Naoki, Izumi Hajime, Frank Jannuzi, Kawakami Takashi, Kawakatsu Ueki Chikako, Kondo Shigekatsu, Kono Taro, Kurata Hideya, Michishita Narushige, Nagashima Akihisa, Oshima Takashi, Ted Osius, Saiki Akitaka, Sato Katsumi, Shibata Gaku, Shinoda Tomohito, David Straub, Sugiura Mika, Takashima Hatsu-hisa, Takesada Hideshi, Tanaka Hitoshi, Tokuchi Hideshi, Tosaki Hirofumi, Watanabe Akio, David Wolff, Yamamoto Ichita, and many others. We are also grateful to Major General Yamaguchi Noboru at the National Institute for Defense Studies and to Professor Ito Kenichi at the Japan Forum on International Relations for arranging special group meetings dedicated to this topic. The interviews with U.S. officials were particularly constructive in terms of understanding how well the government-to-government process of communication on these issues is working and whether or not any serious gaps exist in priorities and perceptions.

In order to keep the report concise and useful to policy makers, background explanations and historical context are kept to a minimum. There is a good deal of valuable literature available in both Japanese and English regarding Japan-DPRK relations, past and present, so a chronological explanation of how we arrived at the current situation, for example, is limited.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this report focuses on the most current trends and determining factors in North Korea policy making in Japan, the mechanics of how policy is made and influenced, and what this might mean for U.S. officials pondering their alternatives.

Some final words of acknowledgment and thanks are in order before moving on to the body of this report. I could not have completed this report without the research assistance of Hanai Takeshi, who helped me pour through voluminous Japanese language material and provided valuable insights at critical moments. I am also appreciative of the research support at IFPA by Choi Hyun Jin and Guillermo Pinczuk, Adelaide Ketchum's editing work, and the graphic art and publication design efforts of Christina Roberts and Christian Hoffman. I am also grateful for the support from IFPA's leadership, Dr. Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Dr. Jacquelyn K. Davis, and Dr. Charles M. Perry. Responsibility for any errors or omissions in this report rests with the author. The entire project team is grateful to the Smith Richardson Foundation for its financial support and, in particular, for the advice and encouragement of senior program officer Allan Song. In this report, Japanese and Korean names appear with the family name first and the given name second, as is the custom in those countries.

1 For useful background reading in English see Fouse 2004, Hong 2006, or International Crisis Group 2005.



# Executive Summary

As outlined in the introduction, policy coordination with Japan regarding North Korea is increasingly important for U.S. policy makers, given the disappointing performance of the six-party process and the persistent security challenges posed by the DPRK (in particular its development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, and its sale of missiles on the export market). The situation is exacerbated by inflamed diplomatic tensions between Japan, on one side, and China and South Korea, on the other, with regard to territorial disputes and interpretations of Japan's colonial legacy, in addition to a more ambiguous regional security picture arising from China's increased military investments and a weakening U.S.-ROK alliance. This growing divide between the Northeast Asian mainland and the U.S.-Japan alliance runs counter to America's long-term national interests in regional stability and economic integration. Japan's policy decisions in this regard are beyond Washington's control, but they are not beyond its influence. Particularly as Japan prepares for a leadership change this fall, now is an opportune time for U.S. policy makers to take stock of current trends and to work with their Japanese colleagues to better incorporate North Korea policy into a larger regional framework that serves our collective long-term goals.

*Within Japan*, U.S. policy makers should understand that:

- Japan's foreign policy toward North Korea is a sensitive political issue that must take domestic public opinion into account. As a result, politicians play a more important role in North Korea policy development and implementation than in other foreign policy issues. Widespread public skepticism and antagonism towards North Korea, however, have pushed the Japanese government into a passive diplomatic stance, leaving it dependent on events or the action of others to create opportunities for diplomatic advancement.
- The North Korea policy spectrum among lawmakers and officials in Japan can roughly be divided into pro-dialogue and pressure-oriented factions. Although the pressure faction is ascendant, a clear "victory" by this group would not serve U.S. interests, since it could limit negotiating flexibility and because the fac-

tion has ties to certain nationalist groups that could complicate regional diplomatic initiatives. A balance among these two factions is preferable.

- The Japanese government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have crafted a unique two-track policy-making/coordinating process to manage the involvement of at least sixteen government agencies in the issue. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) retains the lead for negotiations and policy support, but decision making is increasingly centralized at the nexus of top LDP leadership, the prime minister's office, and the Cabinet Secretariat. The Defense Agency's role could increase in the future, but it is only a minor contributor at this point.

*In a U.S.-Japan context*, therefore:

- As the LDP prepares for (and undergoes) a change in leadership this fall, U.S. policy makers should reach out regularly to both dialogue and pressure faction lawmakers in a balanced and informal effort to deepen the U.S.-Japan strategic dialogue beyond its current State Department-MOFA configuration, with a particular focus on Northeast Asia and North Korea policy issues.
- With regard to North Korea, minor strategic and tactical policy gaps between the allies is acceptable and can even enhance each other's leverage in talks with Pyongyang, if coordinated carefully. Despite generally effective bilateral communication at the working level, however, the dialogue has stagnated at the decision-making level to a point where each country's strategic direction and critical path for policy making on the issue is only vaguely understood by the other, and too often top officials have resorted to stale platitudes when questioned about next steps.
- Regardless of whether talks with North Korea advance or retreat, interagency cooperation within the United States and Japan and between the allies will grow in importance, either to help craft or implement an agreement, or to coordinate strident defensive measures involving specialists in finance, trade and customs, nonproliferation, diplomacy, surveillance and

intelligence, defense, and law enforcement, among other sectors. The diplomatic infrastructure, however, might not be sufficient to manage such a complex and politically charged bilateral issue.

- At the very least, the State Department's Bureau of East Asia Affairs needs to get back up to full strength (for example, the former special envoy for the six-party talks, Joe DeTrani, has not been replaced as of May 2006, and two new directors for the Japan and Korea desks will not be in place until this summer), and consideration should be given to a higher level of regular interagency coordination with presidential backing (either at the National Security Council or a special State Department coordinator similar to the role played by Bill Perry and Wendy Sherman in the 1990s), given the issue's rising stakes.
- Moreover, a near-term goal might be to reconvene an "across the board" bilateral strategy session on North Korea first held in 2003 following the Bush-Koizumi summit in Crawford, Texas. The groundwork could be laid at the Bush-Koizumi summit scheduled for June 2006, prepared for in the summer, and carried out in the fall or winter of 2006-07.
- The goal of such a strategy session (and U.S.-Japan policy vis-à-vis North Korea in general) should be to reorient and reconfirm the two governments' approaches to these issues so that they are in a collective position to help create and to take advantage of opportunities that might arise in the six-party or related forums, as well as to be better prepared for the possible failure of the process (in terms of implementing defensive measures and minimizing the fallout from a potential rift with China and South Korea).

*In a six-party context:*

- Most pressure faction members in Japan would prefer to explicitly link resolution of the abduction issue to a broader nuclear deal with North Korea, but U.S. policy makers should resist this concept because it limits negotiating flexibility. The abduction issue and the broader human rights agenda concerning North Korea should be pursued in a multilateral fashion, but outside of six-party talks, since nearly all the parties interpret the substance of that agenda differently.
- This is not to suggest that Washington should try to divorce entirely the abduction issue and Japanese public opinion from its calculations regarding North Korean diplomacy. This is neither politically viable nor necessary in Japan. It is a delicate matter, however, to press the human rights agenda in a way that does

not give Pyongyang diplomatic cover to avoid dealing with pressing regional security issues (by labeling it a component of a "hostile policy" toward the DPRK) to avoid adhering to its bilateral and international agreements. The United States and Japan must put themselves in a position to proceed at varying speeds on different tracks of dialogue (security, economic, and human rights), and they will need to prepare their citizens for such an approach.

- The United States and Japan should not give up on South Korea as a potential ally in their effort to craft workable North Korea policy, as many of the ROK's positions are driven by domestic politics, and there is a chance that a new ROK leadership in 2008 could adopt an ever so slightly more U.S.-Japan friendly approach. There is still a role for trilateral coordination, and there might also be ways to coordinate this initiative with the State Department's high-level strategic dialogue with China's Foreign Ministry.
- Opportunities to clarify positions and to make incremental progress (especially private, informal opportunities) should be seized. U.S. lead negotiator Chris Hill's refusal to meet with his North Korean counterpart in Tokyo in April 2006 was a disappointment in this respect. Such a meeting would have offered a comfortably informal way to explore options to restart the six-party talks, and it would have indirectly underscored Japan's potential value to North Korea as an influential friend of the United States.
- Political and diplomatic fences are being erected in the Northeast Asia region in ways that could run counter to America's long-term interests, bad neighbors notwithstanding. Some fence building might be inevitable, even practical and useful, in some cases. But these fences must not be built so high as to discourage their dismantlement at the appropriate time. Economic sanctions and other forms of pressure are valuable tools, but more often than not their value is realized when they are removed (as part of a confidence-building process), rather than when they are applied. Overall, greater clarity is needed regarding the application of incentives and the removal of disincentives within the six-party process, and this suggests a need for strong U.S. leadership, closer U.S.-Japan policy coordination on these topics, and more frequent (if not formal) multilateral dialogue.

# North Korea Policy Making in Japan, Then and Now

The mechanics of Japanese policy making toward North Korea were initially developed during the Cold War and were shaped by Japan's domestic political arrangements. Briefly, the unofficial nature of Japan-DPRK ties led to a complex web of bilateral interactions, in lieu of a lead role for Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). A coalition of sympathetic groups in Japan maintained regular contact with North Korea in one form or another. These groups included the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the Clean Government Party (Komeito), and, to a lesser extent, the Japan Communist Party (JCP), along with the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chosen Soren), certain trade unions, the Japan-Korea (North) Association, the Japan-Korea (North) Trade Association, and others.

The ruling LDP was anti-communist and pro-American overall, but factions existed within the party that were considered pro-China, pro-Taiwan, pro-DPRK, or pro-ROK (with the first and third largely overlapping), and they occasionally engaged North Korea in diplomatic discussions, often through a group they formed with other parties in 1971 known as the Dietmen's League for the Promotion of Japan-North Korean Friendship. Underlying this arrangement was a network of regional and industrial interest groups that funneled money or votes to sympathetic parties and politicians, as well as media outlets that tended to favor one policy line over the other. There was always a limit in terms of how closely Japanese politicians could court Pyongyang, however, since North Korea was still a Cold War opponent, and Japan had clearly recognized South Korea as the peninsula's legitimate government.<sup>1</sup>

But as the Cold War was coming to a close in the late 1980s, Japan-DPRK relations entered a new phase. Japan was at the height of its economic power, and in South Korea the economy continued to make impressive gains as domestic politics grew more stable. In 1988, ROK President Roh Tae Woo announced that his government would support other countries' opening of political relations with North Korea, and he emphasized a *nordpolitik* policy, which sought

warmer relations with socialist countries, primarily China and the Soviet Union. North Korea viewed Japan as a potential counterbalance to the ROK's diplomatic offensive (as well as a potential source of much-needed cash and technology), while Japan saw a chance to increase its own leverage on the peninsula vis-à-vis Beijing and Moscow.<sup>2</sup>

Though the traditional, informal contacts between Japan and North Korea remained, Tokyo now felt free to engage Pyongyang more formally, and it allowed for a greater MOFA role in the diplomatic process (particularly by the Asian Affairs Bureau), as well as more direct involvement by senior LDP leaders. Some have argued that Tokyo approached its discussions with Pyongyang as one way to gain greater foreign policy autonomy from Seoul and Washington,<sup>3</sup> and this is likely true to some extent, but simple explanations belie the complex and fast changing diplomatic landscape in the region. An important domestic political dynamic was also a factor.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned above, the LDP was often of different minds when it came to foreign policy questions, and the issue of North Korea was unique in that MOFA did not have a long history of involvement. Instead, politicians had greater influence than they did on other foreign policy issues, and the early 1990s saw a number of cabinets made up of Diet members who were generally more sympathetic to China and North

1 The Japan-ROK Basic Agreement of 1965 recognized the ROK's claim of peninsular sovereignty, and it opened the door to significant flows of development aid from Japan to South Korea to help boost economic growth.

2 For a useful discussion of developments during this time, see Fouse (2004).

3 Some, like Fouse (2004), point to Kanemaru's visit to Pyongyang in 1990 as a sign of Japan's desire for policy independence (since the resulting Japan-DPRK communiqué surprised Seoul and Washington), but others suggest that the agreement by Kanemaru on the controversial communiqué wording stemmed more from his personal conversations with Kim Il Sung (as in Oberdorfer (2001)).

4 Examples of the changing regional diplomatic landscape from 1989 to 1992 include warming North-South relations, the two countries' entry into the UN, the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident in Beijing, and the normalization of ROK-USSR and ROK-China relations. Pyongyang was motivated to improve relations with Japan by the warming of ROK-China and ROK-USSR ties. Kim Il-sung reportedly sought a commitment from Deng Xiaoping for China not to recognize South Korea until DPRK-Japan relations were normalized.

## **Player Profile: Chosen Soren**

The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (known as Chosen Soren in Japanese) is the name of an organization of ethnic Koreans with close ties to North Korea. Since Japan has no diplomatic relations with the DPRK, Chosen Soren is North Korea's de facto embassy in Tokyo. At its peak, its organizational structure included a headquarters in Tokyo, prefectural and regional head offices and branches with eighteen mass propaganda bodies, and thirty-eight credit unions. Membership reached 470,000 in the 1950s, though it has declined to approximately 150,000 today.

### **The Origin of Chosen Soren**

At the end of World War II, there were over two million Koreans in Japan. The majority returned to Korea immediately after liberation, but some 600,000-700,000 remained. Nearly 90 percent of those who remained came from what is now South Korea, but it was the DPRK's Kim Il-Sung who moved most quickly to attract the allegiance of these Koreans, setting up a network of Korean-language schools, high schools, and a university in Japan, which lured not only ethnic Koreans with leftist sentiments, but also those who felt discriminated against and disaffected in Japan. As a result, more than two-thirds of ethnic Koreans in Japan chose a North Korean affiliation.

Han Deok-Su, who had participated in the leftist labor movement in Japan, founded Chosen Soren on May 25, 1955, with support from the North Korean government. In the same year, the Korean community established the Chogin banking system, composed of banks and credit unions that provided low-interest loans to mostly pro-Pyongyang residents in Japan. The number of Chogin-affiliated institutions increased steadily over the next forty years, developing into a nationwide network with deposits of more than ¥2 trillion (Johnston 2004). Over the years, it has often been suspected (and occasionally documented) that some Chosen Soren- and Chogin-related funds were diverted to the campaign war chests of certain pro-China/pro-DPRK lawmakers in the LDP (especially those from the Japan Sea coast), including Kanemaru Shin. In addition, top Chosen Soren officials have often acted as go-betweens for these politicians and the leadership in Pyongyang.

### **Remittances to Pyongyang and Illegal Money Transfers**

The Chosen Soren helped facilitate trade between Japan and the DPRK, and member remittances (or those from member-owned businesses) also provided an important source of income for Pyongyang. Estimates of this money pipeline's size vary, but one well-regarded assessment suggests that the total was perhaps around \$100 million per year during the peak "bubble" years (Eberstadt 1996). That number is probably less than \$40 million today, following the bursting of Japan's bubble economy in the early 1990s, with the total reported to the Japanese government said to be about \$33 million (Chanlett-Avery 2003, 4).

### **Recent Situation**

In May 2005, Chosen Soren celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, but the scale and influence of the organization have declined significantly, and the group has come under increasing government pressure. First, Japan intensified its monitoring of the physical pipeline between Chosen Soren members and North Korea, embodied in the thousand-ton cargo and passenger ferry *Mangyongbong-92* that sails back and forth across the Sea of Japan. The ferry used to average about two trips per month, but the crackdown caused service to be suspended for seven months in 2003, and the ferry made only one visit to Japan in the first four months of 2006.

Second, local governments and courts in Japan have increasingly moved to strip Chosen Soren entities of their preferential tax treatment, and in some cases they have seized property in default and auctioned it off, most recently in Fukuoka (*Kyodo News* 2006a) and Osaka (*Yonhap News* 2006).\*

Third, the Diet passed laws in 2004 to allow the government to interrupt all money transfers to Pyongyang or to ban port calls by North Korean ships under certain circumstances. Finally, police investigations of the abductions in the 1970s and 1980s are now implicating some Chosen Soren members as accomplices (both willing and coerced), which will further diminish the organization's influence.

Chosen Soren's sole remaining relevance is as a diplomatic conduit between Tokyo and Pyongyang. The most important link is said to be between Chosen Soren's vice chairman, Ho Jong-man, and Koizumi's personal secretary, Iijima Isao.

\* The central government's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has officially urged all local authorities to review their tax breaks for facilities owned by Chosen Soren, as of April 1, 2006.

Korea than to South Korea.<sup>5</sup> This situation, combined with regional developments, led to the opening of normalization talks with North Korea in 1991, which coincided with a series of North-South breakthroughs and the start of high-level U.S.-DPRK political discussions in January 1992. Japan demonstrated that it would seriously pursue normalization with North Korea, as long as this did not significantly con-

5 For example, Takaka faction members like Kanemaru, Takeshita Noboru, and Kaifu Toshiki, and Kochikai members like Miyazawa Kiichi, Kono Yohei, and Kato Koichi, who were political descendents of Yoshida Shigeru (who had such a poor relationship with ROK President Rhee Syngman). For a discussion of this phenomenon see Yoshibumi (1998).

flict with U.S. and ROK policies. In fact, U.S. and Japanese officials communicated closely during this time, in part for each nation to reassure the other that it would not move too quickly or precipitously with normalization, as Japan believed the United States did with China in 1972.

This period of optimism on the peninsula proved to be short-lived, however, as Washington grew increasingly concerned about the North's nuclear power (and suspected nuclear weapons) programs. Even though Pyongyang had signed a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in early 1992, IAEA access to key DPRK nuclear sites was delayed and then restricted. North-



South progress was sputtering, and even though Washington believed in “cautious engagement” with Pyongyang, it had also decided that the nuclear question was the top priority (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004, 15). The Japan-DPRK normalization talks broke down at the eighth round in November 1992 (ostensibly because of Japan’s persistence in raising a somewhat obscure but nagging issue regarding unsolved missing persons cases with suspected links to North Korea, which is now well known as the “abduction issue”).<sup>6</sup> Four months later, Pyongyang announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Two months after North Korea’s NPT announcement, the DPRK began test flights of its *Nodong* missile (able to reach Japan), and, with this nuclear-missile combination, North Korea began to take on a much different profile in Japan’s security calculations.<sup>7</sup> Japanese defense planners began to look at North Korea as a direct military threat, rather than focusing solely on the potential problems stemming from vaguely defined “instability” on the peninsula. In addition, the list of involved MOFA bureaus increased, as the nuclear issue drew the North American Bureau and the Policy Coordination Bureau into the policy-making process. Later in 1993, however, Japan’s long-ruling LDP broke apart and lost its grip on power, ushering in a period of convoluted and weak political leadership in the country. Japan took a back seat to the United States and South Korea during much of the nuclear/missile crisis that unfolded over the rest of the decade (see Schoff 2005a).

During the 1990s, Japan did make attempts to initiate its own dialogue with North Korea, often described as an attempt to avoid having its DPRK policy be determined in Washington and Seoul, but Tokyo had little to offer within the confines of trilateral policy coordination, and its list of demands was growing longer (e.g., nuclear programs, missiles, and the abduction issue, which was gaining attention in certain weekly magazines, the *Sankei Shimbun*, and in the sidewalk speeches of right-wing nationalist groups). Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi (a socialist and long-time advocate of improving relations with the DPRK) tried to jumpstart normalization talks in 1995, but Washington and Seoul quickly voiced their displeasure, and domestic public senti-

ment was increasingly critical of North Korea. Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro agreed to cautious engagement of the North in 1997, which culminated in token visits to Japan by Japanese wives of North Koreans, but public opinion of North Korea continued to deteriorate. Then, Japan-DPRK relations arguably hit an all-time low when the North tested a *Taepo-dong* missile in Japanese airspace in 1998.

Japan and North Korea did resume normalization talks in April 2000, but this series of negotiations did not last long and fell apart later that year, in part because Pyongyang was feeling more confident about U.S.-DPRK progress (Cha 2001).<sup>8</sup> As North Korea’s discussions with the new Bush administration faltered, however, Pyongyang’s policy pendulum swung back toward Japan, and the new (and receptive) Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro instructed MOFA to probe North Korean officials for a mutually acceptable avenue for renewed talks. This time the negotiations would be low key, unofficial, and out of sight. A few MOFA officials would manage the process, in close communication with a handful of top LDP leaders in Koizumi’s cabinet. This represented a new (and ultimately temporary) approach to foreign-policy making in Japan, as it was very top-down and extremely closely held.

### Top-down Policy Making and the 2002 Koizumi-Kim Summit

By 2001, Japan’s motivation for normalization with North Korea appeared to be changing. Whereas before, Tokyo often approached bilateral talks as a means to maintain some political or economic influence on the Korean Peninsula, especially when North-South relations were moving forward, the impetus now seemed rooted in national security concerns, as well as being informed by the growing importance of the abduction issue to the voting public. The issue of Japan’s DPRK policy had slowly transformed, therefore, from one of relatively abstract geopolitical concerns to a more concrete national security and domestic political issue. Moreover, the center of power in the LDP had shifted from the old Tanaka faction and the Kochikai to a new (and in many ways more conservative and nationalistic) group of leaders including Koizumi, Mori Yoshiro, Fukuda Yasuo, Abe Shinzo, Aso Taro, Hiranuma Takeo, Yamasaki Taku, Nakagawa Shoichi, and Nakayama Hidenao. Within even this group, however, the approach to North Korea varied, and leading up to the 2002 Koizumi-Kim summit, the more pragmatic and pro-dialogue policy makers took the lead.

6 The apparent linkage of Japanese abductees with North Korea was strengthened in 1992, when a North Korean woman convicted of bombing a Korean Airlines jet told South Korean authorities that she had been taught Japanese in North Korea, allegedly by an abducted Japanese woman named Lee Un-Hae.

7 Tanaka Hitoshi reflects on how these and related events affected his thinking about the primacy of national security concerns in a roundtable discussion (Nishimura 2002).

8 Others also attributed the breakdown in talks (at least in part) to a poor domestic atmosphere in Japan (see Takasaki 2004).

The key players in this new Japan-DPRK dialogue were Prime Minister Koizumi, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda, and MOFA's director general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, Tanaka Hitoshi, who had established a connection with a senior North Korean government official known as "Mr. X." The unofficial and largely secret meetings (about thirty in all) took place in Beijing at the end of 2001 and into 2002, most often on the weekends. Generally Tanaka would meet with Koizumi, Fukuda, and the foreign minister on Friday, ahead of a weekend Beijing meeting, and then a follow-up meeting on Monday to de-brief the group. For the first six months or so, the Japan team was unsure if this new approach would work, but they sought ways to build mutual confidence, and both sides tested the other negotiator's access to his country's top leadership, with some tangible results (interview 2005a). Overall, Koizumi instructed Tanaka to "clarify the fundamental principles upon which Japan would proceed, and to convey these principles in no uncertain terms to [the North Koreans]" (Hiramatsu 2003). The main point was that Japan would address sincerely issues that stemmed from its colonial past, but that progress on the abduction issue and other security issues (such as missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)) was essential.

Noticeably absent from this tight policy circle was Abe Shinzo, then deputy chief cabinet secretary, who had a reputation for being hawkish toward North Korea. "It was Fukuda and Tanaka who dragged Kim Jong-il to the summit table and pulled the trigger for normalization...and they kept Abe out of the loop and gave him no information on Koizumi's visit or the contents of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration" (Nogami 2004, 241-42). Indeed, Fukuda was powerful enough in the government at this time to be nicknamed the "shadow prime minister" or "shadow foreign minister," and Tanaka was said to be a key source of Fukuda's power (Fukuda 2005). After the public announcement of Koizumi's planned trip to Pyongyang, Tanaka briefed Abe on the preparations, and Koizumi put Abe in charge of the abduction issue, creating a "good-cop bad-cop" dynamic and protecting his political right. This contributed to a strained Fukuda-Abe relationship at times, since Fukuda's political stature was not tied to the abduction issue in the same way that Abe's was, and Fukuda (like Koizumi) had demonstrated a greater degree of pragmatism and flexibility toward North Korea. The two were known to argue intensely on the subject (*Shukan Bunshun* 2002).

A brief explanation of political genealogy is useful at this point, since many of Japan's most powerful politicians are the sons and grandsons of past leaders. Fukuda, for example, is the eldest son of former Prime Minister Fukuda

Takeo, who once led the faction started by former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke (a former minister in Tojo Hideki's war cabinet and a staunch anti-communist and Taiwan supporter). Fukuda Takeo was also considered pro-Taiwan and sometimes a hawk, but he had a pragmatic streak that advocated "omni-directional diplomacy," and he presided over the signing of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1978. Koizumi's first job in politics was as a secretary in Fukuda Takeo's office, and many consider him to be an influential mentor to Koizumi, whose father had died just a short time earlier. Abe is Kishi's grandson, which reinforces his hawkish image. Political heritage is not necessarily a determining factor in Japanese foreign-policy making, but we should be aware of these relationships, especially at times when a small number of people are making the most critical political decisions.

As the Tanaka-"Mr. X" discussions carried on into the spring and summer of 2002, Koizumi kept U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage informed of key details at critical times, though most of the U.S. policy-making apparatus was caught off guard when Koizumi's Pyongyang trip was announced on August 30. During this time, Armitage was informing MOFA officials and Koizumi about America's increasingly concrete suspicions regarding a North Korean program to develop highly enriched uranium (HEU) for possible use in nuclear weapons, which was ultimately the spark for the second North Korean nuclear crisis. At least a few MOFA officials sought more detail from the Americans regarding their suspicions, but U.S. officials would not reveal the sources of their information. "The United States brought up the HEU issue...but we had known about this since 1999, when the Americans asked us to stop exporting certain dual-use parts. Why was this all of a sudden a big issue now?" (interview 2005a). Despite some minor grumbling at MOFA, U.S.-Japan communication on this issue was quite clear at the top level. Armitage later recalled, "The Prime Minister assured me that none of our interests would be harmed...and the Bush administration was confident that [Koizumi] would protect our joint interests" (*Oriental Economist* 2006).

Against this backdrop, Koizumi traveled to Pyongyang in September 2002 for an historic meeting with Kim Jong-il, which produced a theoretical blueprint for concluding normalization talks called the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration (see appendix A). Japan apologized for its colonial rule and promised economic assistance upon normalization. Kim indirectly acknowledged the abductions and vowed they would never happen again. The DPRK also agreed to maintain its moratorium on missile launches and pledged to comply with international agreements on nuclear issues. It seemed

like a breakthrough, except that the North Korean leader never understood the implications of his abduction admission. Thus began a very public and tortured process of trying to bring the survivors and their families back to Japan, as well as accounting for all of the suspected abductees who may have died or been killed in North Korea. It was the beginning of another downward spiral in Japan-DPRK relations.

The Pyongyang Declaration, North Korea's admission of guilt, and the return to Japan of some surviving abductees were all tangible achievements of the Koizumi-Fukuda-Tanaka diplomatic initiative that began in 2001, but it is hard to consider the 2002 summit a success. Japan-DPRK normalization was arguably pushed further into the future, as the swell in public antipathy toward North Korea has made it harder for Japanese politicians to accept anything less than a clear and public mea culpa from Pyongyang, the extradition of a number of the abductors, and a thorough follow-up investigation in North Korea involving Japanese officials regarding the fate of Japan's missing citizens. All of this has been made less likely, however, given the sense of betrayal that most North Koreans feel by the way Japan responded to Kim Jong-il's admissions and the refusal, for example, to allow the "visiting" abductees to return to North Korea to be with their families, despite an understanding with MOFA's Tanaka that their trip to Japan would be "short."<sup>9</sup>

Although the summit meeting was not a success per se, it is worthwhile noting the various factors that contributed to what was still probably the most productive episode in Japan-DPRK diplomatic history. From the Japanese perspective, the initiative 1) was very closely held; 2) was led from the top down; 3) utilized a direct and effective pipeline for bilateral communication (but not actually brokered by a politician); 4) enjoyed ROK support for engagement; and 5) benefited from a relatively tough U.S. stance vis-à-vis North Korea. Of course, a key intangible was Pyongyang's willingness to engage in a focused and extended set of discussions and to meet Tokyo halfway on the issues of abduction and colonial-era compensation (or at least what it considered halfway). After the summit, one MOFA official explained, "North Korea reverted back to its old way of diplomacy; to get the best deal it can by dealing with individual politicians and utilizing its Chosen Soren channels" (interview 2005a).

9 Tanaka negotiated a short visit to Japan for the abductees, but the public dismay with North Korea was so strong that it became politically difficult to allow them to return to North Korea. Tanaka accepted that this was a political decision, though he did advise that it would probably ruin his pipeline to "Mr. X" and North Korea. In the end, he admitted, it was the only way the politicians could have gone (interview 2005a).

## Japan-DPRK Relations since the 2002 Koizumi-Kim Summit: Dialogue vs. Pressure

The deterioration of Japan-DPRK relations since the Koizumi-Kim summit in 2002 has been a product of both external and internal factors. Even though the abduction issue had been a persistent drag on normalization talks since 1992, it was always addressed in terms of suspicion and allegations. Kim's admission turned these allegations into concrete abduction cases. "Long fed a stream of dubious news, the people and media exploded in surprise and anger after receiving [these] indisputable reports" (Wada 2003). The good news of the repatriation of some survivors was overwhelmed by the realization of the crimes that were committed and by the volume of unanswered questions. The subsequent collapse of the Agreed Framework and suspension of the light-water reactor (LWR) project because of Pyongyang's apparent HEU program dealt another blow to whatever diplomatic momentum remained, and the Iraq war further enhanced Pyongyang's paranoia and its perception that Japan was aligned with Washington against North Korea.<sup>10</sup>

Domestic factors, however, were equally important and might be instructive as to the future development of Japan's DPRK policies and its coordination with the United States. In addition to the political changes that had taken place in Japan during the 1990s, there were also adjustments in the makeup of civil society organizations involved in North Korean issues. Chosen Soren was still around, though with a reduced membership, and other groups such as the labor unions, the Socialist Party, and the LDP Dietmen's League for the Promotion of Japan-North Korean Friendship were all weakened. In their place rose groups dedicated to the abduction issue, such as the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (known in Japanese as the Sukuu-kai), the Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (Kazoku-kai), and the Diet Members Union for the Rapid Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (Rachi Giren).

### Pressure Groups, Pundits, and the Public

These groups (and other sympathetic politicians and opinion leaders), criticized what they viewed as a MOFA attempt to accept North Korea's admission at face value and move on, which led to blistering attacks on MOFA (and Director

10 The Agreed Framework refers to a nuclear freeze deal concluded in October 1994 between the United States and North Korea whereby the two countries were supposed to cooperate to replace the DPRK's graphite-moderated reactors with more proliferation-resistant LWRs and to move towards political and diplomatic normalization.

## **Player Profile: Kazoku-kai**

The Kazoku-kai (Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea) is a civil organization comprising family members of abduction victims. The Kazoku-kai has worked tirelessly to pressure the government to take various actions on their members' behalf by putting a human face on the abduction issue and by keeping it prominent in the public mind. With help from other groups, its members organize events (including a traveling photo exhibit), give speeches and interviews, and meet with key figures inside and outside the government to lobby for their goal of rescuing relatives kidnapped by North Korean agents (many of whom they believe to still be alive).

### **The Origin and Basic Policy of the Kazoku-kai**

The Kazoku-kai was established in March 1997, one month after the media sensationally reported the earlier abduction of Yokota Megumi. The group is led by Megumi's father, Yokota Shigeru, and other active members include her mother Sakie and her brother Takuya, along with family members of other suspected abductees. The original goal was to coordinate and strengthen the family members' actions through collective effort.\* Other Kazoku-kai leaders include Hasuike Toru, Iizuma Shigeo, and Masumoto Teruaki.

The Kazoku-kai's political stance has traditionally been neutral, but in the last few years it has become more hawkish, which has created some friction within the group. Chairman Yokota Shigeru argues that the Japanese government should take "more and more" a hard-line approach to North Korea, while then-Secretary General (the current vice chairman) Hasuike Toru in an interview expressed his frustration, saying that he cannot keep up with the current Kazoku-kai placing economic sanctions above anything else and becoming fixated on that policy. He observed that the Kazoku-kai is becoming a political pressure group that advocates regime change in North Korea, instead of a pure civil society group focused on rescuing the abductees (FLASH 2005).†

Overall, the Kazoku-kai's basic policy today parallels that of the Suku-kai, which is to prioritize sanctions on North Korea. They welcome hawkish (pressure faction) officials in the government such as Abe Shinzo, Nakayama Kyoko, Saiki Akitaka, and others, and they strongly criticized Koizumi's second North Korea visit in 2004, which seemed to them to be too compromising. Although the Kazoku-kai is generally well supported by the Japanese public, that particular campaign backfired when it was seen as being unfairly harsh. After receiving a flood of protest phone calls and letters, Kazoku-kai members apologized for their criticism of Prime Minister Koizumi.

### **Economic Sanctions and Efforts of Internationalization**

Nearly all Kazoku-kai events are now organized in cooperation with the Suku-kai. The goals of today's Kazoku-kai campaign are to impose economic sanctions and raise international awareness about the issue so as to increase pressure on Pyongyang from other countries and international bodies. The group advocates an aggressive approach, such as when Yokota testified before the Diet that Japan should feel emboldened about taking risks without fear of endangering existing abductees in North Korea. At the same time, demonstrating the group's lobbying power, he requested the establishment of a governmental organization to collect and provide intelligence on the issue (National Diet 2005). This did in fact happen eight months later, when, in March 2006, the abduction countermeasures section was specially created within the National Policy Agency's Foreign Affairs Division.

Overall, the group's impact belies its small size. Internationally, Kazoku-kai members gave a speech to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee in April 2003, contributed to the creation of an award-winning, American-made documentary film on the subject, and met with President Bush and other top U.S. officials in April 2006. Representatives from both the Kazoku-kai and the Suku-kai visited Thailand to meet families of suspected Thai abductees and with Thai government officials, as well as with ROK victims' families. The Kazoku-kai and the Suku-kai have also reached out regularly to sympathetic U.S. groups and members of Congress, and they see U.S. support as critical to their cause of building pressure on North Korea. In April 2006, a representative from each group testified before the U.S. Congress for the first time.

\* Yokota Sakie, wife of Chairman Yokota Shigeru, has said that MOFA changed its attitude toward the victims' families after the establishment of the Kazoku-kai, and they were finally able to arrange meetings with senior officials at MOFA (Aoi Kotoba no Kizun 2003).

† Hasuike, who has his own reputation for being critical of Japanese government policy and vindictive toward North Korea, later apologized for these comments.

General Tanaka Hitoshi of the Asian Affairs Bureau) in Japanese periodicals such as *Shukan Bunshun* and *Shokun!*, among other forums (Wada 2003). This criticism at times devolved into intimidation, such as when a rightist group planted a bomb-like device in Tanaka's garage at his home in September 2003, or when senior LDP lawmaker Nonaka Hiromu received a bullet in the mail for allegedly being too dovish toward North Korea. Nonaka responded, "Nothing daunts my stance and belief in seeking peace and friendship in Asia" (Agence France-Presse 2003a). Koizumi and Fukuda condemned these acts, but in response to a question about the Tanaka bomb threat, the high-profile governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, was quoted as saying, "I think he deserves it. [Tanaka] is under [North Korea's] thumb. Such a person

cannot go head-to-head with North Korea" (Agence France-Presse 2003b). Such was the atmosphere at the time.

This is not to suggest that the Kazoku-kai or Suku-kai were somehow behind these acts of intimidation. The Kazoku-kai, in particular, has been careful to distance itself from the more aggressive or violent elements of Japan's right wing. But there is an alignment of interests across the spectrum of pressure advocates that leads to cooperative efforts at times. For the Kazoku-kai, it is all about the abductees and their families: to rescue those that they can and to find out as much as possible about the fate of the missing persons, as well as to punish those responsible. The Suku-kai and other groups have a broader agenda, as many of their members are also active in other nationalist or rightist organizations, but when it



### **Player Profile: Sukuu-kai**

The Sukuu-kai (National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea) is a coalition of civil society organizations throughout Japan that share the common goal of assisting the Kazoku-kai (Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea) and rescuing Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea. As of September 2005, there are thirty-eight member organizations in Japan including thirty-seven regional Sukuu-kai branches in thirty-six prefectures and one city, and one youth organization (Sukuu-kai 2005). Its activities range from organizing petition drives, calling for boycotts of North Korean products, and staging sit-in protests to promote its objectives.

#### **The Origin and Basic Policy of the Sukuu-kai**

The Sukuu-kai was established in April 1998, in response to the upsurge of support groups for the Kazoku-kai, which was founded a year earlier. Its name became widely known in Japan during Koizumi's North Korean visit in 2002. Out of regret that the Sukuu-kai had not known anything about abductee Soga Hitomi before North Korea provided her name at the 2002 summit, and also in order to thoroughly investigate a flood of inquiries from families of missing persons, the Sukuu-kai set up an independent investigating organization called the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea (COMJAN) in January 2003. This group has been re-investigating missing person cases for possible links to North Korea, and it cooperates officially with the cabinet's Abduction Issue Task Force.

The core of the organization is the Sukuu-kai Administration Board, which is made up of over forty members, including, as chairman, Sato Katsumi (president of the Modern Korea Institute, a conservative think tank); as permanent vice chairman, Nishioka Tsutomu (Tokyo Christian University, professor of Korean studies); as vice chairmen, Shimada Yoichi (Fukui Prefectural University, professor of international politics), Fujino Yoshiaki (attorney); and, as auditor, Yokota Shigeru (the Kazoku-kai chairman). A notable aspect of Sukuu-kai is its relationship with certain nationalistic groups (and possibly even Japanese mafias), in part through the involvement of its leadership in other right-wing causes, such as the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform\* (see Nomura 2004, 34-35, and Koike 2004).

The Sukuu-kai takes a hawkish stance toward North Korea, because (as permanent vice chairman Nishioka asserts), the Kim Jong-Il regime is "evil," and "power" is the only means to influence North Korea's attitude. Chairman Sato has even suggested that Japan should have a nuclear capability to deter North Korea. Since July 2003, the Sukuu-kai's campaign with the Kazoku-kai has been focused on demanding economic sanctions against North Korea by the Japanese government, not only as a sign of Japan's unwavering resolve to rescue the abductees, but also as a message to South Korea and China, so that they might understand Japan's firm stance and persuade Kim Jong-Il to deal with Japan.<sup>†</sup>

#### **Economic Sanctions and Efforts of Internationalization**

Losing patience with the government's reluctance to impose sanctions, the Sukuu-kai in January 2005 promoted a grass-roots boycott of North Korean clams, which was the highest-value bilateral trade item. The boycott, backed by the media, appeared to have some impact, as the import of mollusks from North Korea dropped by over half in 2005 compared to 2004 (though a tougher liability law for certain shippers also contributed to the decrease).

Sukuu-kai and Kazoku-kai members have also visited Washington, D.C., several times to strengthen cooperation and solidarity with the United States on the issue, though the Sukuu-kai in particular is wary of relying too much upon U.S. pressure vis-à-vis North Korea. Vice Chairman Shimada has warned about expecting U.S. action to help solve the problem, and he emphasizes the need to raise public opinion in Thailand and other countries in order to broaden support around the world and strengthen the position of like-minded politicians in the United States and Japan (Seiron 2006).

\* For example, Vice Chairman Shimada was one of the supervising editors of the society's civics textbook.

† Sukuu-kai vice chairman Shimada argues that the goal of economic sanctions should be to change the regime in North Korea. (Shimada 2005).

comes to North Korea, regime change is often the main focus. Still, the Sukuu-kai was one of the first groups to work tirelessly on behalf of the families, starting in the late 1990s, so there is a deep sense of appreciation for that support among many members of the Kazoku-kai. Moreover, while some Sukuu-kai member activities appeal to only a fringe of the Japanese public (such as promoting revisionist school history textbooks), applying pressure on Kim Jong-il is a very marketable position.

North Korea has never been popular in Japan, but from the 1970s until the early 1990s, a "bad" impression of the DPRK was held by less than half the Japanese population. By 2001, in responses to a nationwide poll, this figure had risen to 59 percent. After the Koizumi-Kim summit, nearly 82 percent of Japanese had a "bad" impression of North Korea (Central Research Services 2005). The abduction issue

was Japan's most intense concern regarding North Korea, according to over 90 percent of respondents to a government poll. The next closest concern was Japan's nuclear programs at 66 percent (Cabinet Office 2005). For the Kazoku-kai, therefore, aligning with the political right in the context of this one issue is well understood by the public.

Hirasawa Katsuei, secretary general for the Rachi Giren in 2002, observed, "MOFA and a group of politicians had been dominating North Korean diplomacy until now, and as a result, none of the problems were resolved. After [the 2002 summit], however, the family members, their supporters, and public opinion moved into a position of having a decisive influence on [the problem]." But even Hirasawa cautioned, "The situation of public opinion having power over diplomacy does not necessarily lead to preferable outcomes. It has a dangerous aspect. Diplomacy should be done from a

long-term perspective, but the public is prone to think on a short-term basis” (Hirasawa 2004, 23-4). Still, many more were inclined to heap scorn on the policy elite for their perceived arrogance, including disgruntled bureaucrat Amaki Naoto. “Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Takeuchi Yukio has a habit of saying that it is getting difficult to do diplomacy since the public is gaining knowledge. But it is this very scrutiny by the public that made progress in the abduction issue” (Amaki 2003, 40).

The public and pundits alike scrutinized personnel appointments at MOFA and the fortunes of pro-dialogue or pro-pressure politicians. Sukuu-kai, Kazoku-kai, and Rachi Giren members were joined by political analysts and university scholars in writing numerous articles and appearing frequently on television to provide instant analysis of North Korea-related developments. At the very end of 2002, Tanaka Hitoshi became deputy foreign minister and was replaced by Yabunaka Mitoji as the new director general of the Asian Affairs bureau. Professor Izumi Hajime tried to answer the question that many were asking at the time: why wasn't Tanaka fired? “If the hard-liners get stronger, it will become difficult to negotiate, and as a result there will be no successor [of the negotiation channel for the normalization talks]. Koizumi has no other choice but to rely on Mr. Tanaka for the moment.” The same article quotes Fukuda as saying, “I think the combination of the two [Tanaka and Yabunaka] is good,” and then suggests that Fukuda's strategy is to “use Mr. Yabunaka for the Bush administration and the public, while he holds Tanaka for the back channel” (Samejima 2004).

Skepticism of MOFA and Koizumi, however, remained high. The following comment in a printed roundtable discussion was typical. “What we might see next is the ‘promotion’ of Deputy Director-General [of the Asian Affairs Bureau] Saiki [Akitaka], who is said to be a hard-liner against North Korea. It was leaked to the media that he would be transferred to a new position as minister in the Japanese Embassy in the United States, but public opposition was so strong that the appointment seems to have been cancelled. However, I have no doubt that the government and MOFA as a whole is leaning toward ‘dialogue only’ rather than ‘dialogue and pressure.’” (Sakurai 2004b). Saiki did finally go to serve as deputy chief of mission at the embassy in Washington over a year later.

### Yamasaki's Initiative and Fukuda's Isolation

As noted above, MOFA was on the defensive after 2002 and lost the initiative on North Korea policy. MOFA was eclipsed by political forces championing the application of pressure, but there were also a handful of key politicians seeking ways to sustain the dialogue and follow through on the promise

of the Pyongyang Declaration. In April 2004, former LDP vice president and then-unseated LDP lawmaker Yamasaki Taku, together with then Rachi Giren secretary general Hirasawa Katsuei (also LDP), visited Dalian, China, to talk with senior North Korean officials about how to deal with the abductees' family members still in North Korea and about the possible resumption of normalization talks.<sup>11</sup> This was another sort of “good-cop bad-cop” arrangement, as Yamasaki and Hirasawa were well established on either side of the dialogue-pressure coin, respectively. According to Hirasawa, DPRK officials chose Yamasaki as the point man because they no longer trusted MOFA and wanted to talk with someone who could report directly to Koizumi (Hirasawa 2004, 88-9).<sup>12</sup> Even though Yamasaki had lost his Diet seat, he was well known as one of Koizumi's most influential aides. In Dalian, Yamasaki told the North Koreans that the chance for normalization would end with the Koizumi administration, and he proposed a North Korea visit by a high-ranking Japanese government official.

At the time, Yamasaki saw an opportunity to take the initiative away from Fukuda and to demonstrate his political relevance (Sasaki 2004). Indeed, Yamasaki made calls personally to Koizumi during the visit, received direct instructions, and then proposed sending a high-level government official to North Korea to pick up the family members of the returned abductees (Hirasawa 2004, 90, 96). One month after the Dalian meeting, two top MOFA officials, director general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Yabunaka Mitoji and Deputy Foreign Minister Tanaka, flew to Beijing for talks with Chung Tae-hwa, and the stage was set for Koizumi's second trip to Pyongyang in May 2004.

Similar to Abe before him, Fukuda was now the one kept outside of a North Korean initiative, though it seemed to be more about personal political jockeying than strict policy differences. Regardless, Fukuda was not happy. Though he had never missed a debriefing session at the prime minister's office before the Dalian meeting, he reportedly did not show up upon Yamasaki's return. According to a source in the prime minister's office, “Fukuda noticed that he was out of the loop of the bilateral talks and cancelled the session out of anger” (Suda 2004). Two days later, Fukuda resigned from his post as chief cabinet secretary. The official reason for Fukuda's

11 Before Yamasaki and Hirasawa's visit to Dalian, Hirasawa had already met with ambassador in charge of DPRK-Japan normalization Chung Tae-hwa, Vice Director-General of Foreign Ministry Song Il-ho, and other North Korean officials in Beijing in December 2003.

12 According to Hirasawa, North Korea proposed the involvement of politicians in working-level talks to then-MOFA Deputy Director-General Saiki in August 2004 (2004, 151).

### **Player Profile: Pressure Faction**

The pressure faction is not an official group or cohesive unit in Japan, but the term is useful to identify certain politicians, bureaucrats, scholars, and journalists who generally believe that the government has been too slow to explore the pressure side of the North Korea policy equation. The motivations for championing pressure tactics vary, from the crassly political to the genuine belief that aggressive application of pressure is the only means by which North Korea will respond productively to Japan's legitimate concerns. There are likely some, as well, who believe that nationalist causes are better served by greater tension and division in Northeast Asia (though in what numbers it is hard to measure). Within the Diet, a number of pressure-oriented lawmakers have coalesced in a formal group known as the multi-party Diet Members Union for the Rapid Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (or its shortened Japanese name, *Rachi Giren*), as well as a collection of issue-oriented LDP study groups.\* Politicians tend to dominate the pressure faction, but they draw support from a cadre of intellectuals and interest groups.

#### **Key Players**

The most prominent member of this "faction" is chief cabinet secretary and prime minister front runner Abe Shinzo. Abe is from Yamaguchi prefecture, located on the Korea Strait coast, and he had been a vocal supporter of the abductees' families even before it became politically popular on a national scale. After Koizumi's 2002 trip to Pyongyang, Abe led the cabinet's and the LDP's abduction issue task forces, and in many ways his own political rise has mirrored the rise of the abduction issue in the public consciousness. Since the mid-1990s, like-minded (and nearly all conservative) politicians and opinion leaders spoke out in support of the families and generally advocated a tougher line toward North Korea, backed by articles in the *Sankei Shimbun* and its publishing group. Early advocates included Ishihara Shintaro (now governor of Tokyo), Hirasawa Katsuei, and Nishimura Shingo (Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and former director general of the *Rachi Giren*). This group received a boost in 2000 when the recently installed Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro met with the abductees' families and told them that he would insist on including the abduction issue in the normalization talks with North Korea.

Because of the political popularity of the issue since 2002, the list of pressure advocates has grown rather long, but some notable players (in addition to those mentioned above) who remain active today include these more conservative individuals: Aso Taro (foreign minister and possible candidate to replace Koizumi), Nakagawa Shoichi (minister of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries), Koike Yuri (minister of the environment and minister of state for Okinawa and Northern Territories affairs), Nakagawa Hidenao (chairman of the LDP's policy research council), Yamamoto Ichita (a rising LDP star and head of its sanctions-simulation team), and Hiranuma Takao (former METI minister). Somewhat less conservative players include Takebe Tsutomu (LDP secretary general), Suga Yoshihide (LDP and senior vice minister of internal affairs and communications), Kono Taro (LDP and senior vice minister of justice), Nakagawa Masaharu (DPJ and former secretary general of its abduction issue strategy headquarters), and Kobayashi Yutaka (LDP and parliamentary secretary of economy, trade, and industry). Those generally supportive within MOFA include, among others, Yachi Shotaro (vice foreign minister), Saiki Akitaka (Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the Japanese embassy in Washington), Kanehara Nobukatsu (political counselor at the Washington embassy), and, to some degree, deputy foreign minister Yabunaka Mitoji.

Pressure advocates can be roughly divided into three categories, based on their primary motivation: 1) ideology (nationalism, human rights, democracy, or related emotional perspectives); 2) reason (they are convinced that greater pressure is the only way by which the abduction issue and normalization can eventually be resolved); and 3) politics (those of less conviction who are blowing with the political wind). Even these stark categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as some would say that Abe, for example, shows signs of being motivated by all three factors.

As a largely political group, the pressure faction's strength has waxed and waned since 2002, responsive to the whims of public opinion and its own cohesiveness. After Koizumi's 2004 trip to Pyongyang, for example, Hirasawa was pushed out of his *Rachi Giren* leadership post for his involvement in brokering that "appeasement visit." Hiranuma was cut loose from the LDP by Koizumi in 2005 over postal reform policy differences, and he was then accused by some of trying to use *Rachi Giren* as a way to foster anti-Koizumi sentiment. Nishimura, another outspoken leader, was indicted in 2005 for professional transgressions. But the group flourished in 2003 and after the Yokota Megumi bone-DNA incident in late 2004, when public sentiment against North Korea ran high.

\* The *Rachi Giren* was established in 2002 with a goal of rescuing the abductees. Although pressure is not the only policy approach of its members, it has the majority's support.

resignation was a period of skipped pension payments, but it was also said that the resignation was partly due to the tension created between Koizumi and Fukuda over North Korean policy (instigated by Hirasawa and Yamasaki). The fact that other cabinet ministers with similar pension problems to Fukuda's did not resign seems to support this assessment (interview 2006a, Sakurai 2004b). Hirasawa did not fare well either. Criticized by the pressure advocates for his act of secret diplomacy, he subsequently resigned from his leadership position in the *Rachi Giren*. Yamasaki, however, managed to reestablish himself as politically viable and later won back a Diet seat. He remains a close confidant of Koizumi and cur-

rently heads the LDP's research commission on security. He also has aspirations to run for prime minister.

Another key player in the Koizumi era is the prime minister's top political aide, Iijima Isao, who has been working with Koizumi for more than thirty years and is very skilled at handling the public dimension of policy making. Yamasaki's reemergence in 2004 worked well for Iijima, since Iijima was reportedly interested in trimming the influence of Fukuda, the "shadow prime minister" (Sasaki 2004). Without a Diet seat, Yamasaki could not operate in the political mainstream at that time, so the Dalian meeting became a good opportunity for Iijima to undermine Fukuda's power and bring the initiative back to Koizumi. Iijima was said to have set the

schedule of Koizumi's second visit in May 2004 without wide consultation.<sup>13</sup> As for why Koizumi himself went to North Korea as the "high-level government official," one source in the prime minister's office offered that "Koizumi was dying to go to North Korea" (Sasaki 2004). Iijima, who has been called "Rasputin in the Heisei Era," is a talented political operator who enjoys the prime minister's complete confidence, and he has reportedly developed a reliable connection to Pyongyang via a senior Chosen Soren member, namely Vice Chairman Ho Jong-man.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not this kind of North Korea policy-making mechanism can be replicated in the post-Koizumi era remains to be seen, but it is still in play until the end of Koizumi's term in September 2006.

### Changes in the Government's North Korea Policy-Making Processes

Japan's North Korea policy-making process changed significantly in the post-summit environment. First, the criticism of MOFA (and the political nature of the problem) helped convince Koizumi to give the formal lead on the issue to Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe, who took a harder line toward the North Koreans than MOFA's Tanaka or even Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda. Abe later wrote, "During the course of discussions on the abduction issue, I hear some people saying '...certainly the issue is a pity, and they wish they could help, but this is an emotional issue. On the other hand, the nuclear issue is quite simply a national security issue, that is, a rational issue. It can clearly be said that rationality [*chi*] must be put above emotion [*jo*], because here lies important national interests.' The idea of *chi* and *jo* was about to dominate temporarily...but I believed that the abduction issue is nothing but a national security issue, so I retorted against those media and critics who were trying to trivialize the issue...[and] as a result, there are none of those people claiming *chi* and *jo* now" (Abe and Okazaki 2004, 111-13).

In early 2003, the policy of balancing "dialogue and pressure" began to take shape, and (to modify an old adage) it be-

13 Neither Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko, director general of the Foreign Policy Bureau Nishida Tsuneo, nor even director of the Northeast Asia Division Ito Naoki was told of the schedule in advance (Sakurai 2004a). Some say Iijima's scheduling of the visit was intended to cover up disclosure of Koizumi's pension non-payments, while others say that it was done to get it over with before the Sea Island G8 Summit in June.

14 The Iijima-Ho connection is referred to in a number of weekly magazine articles, often in the context of disparaging the dialogue approach (see *Shukan Shincho* 2004). A *Sankei Shimbun* journalist also mentioned this during a December 15, 2005, interview: "Iijima has the best connection to Pyongyang right now. The others who claim to have a good connection are liars."

came clear in Japan that a politician could attract more voters with pressure than with dialogue. In an almost unprecedented fashion, a foreign policy problem for Japan became a predominant domestic political issue, with potentially lasting influence on Japanese foreign-policy making in the future. The returned Japanese and their families became pawns in the diplomatic tussle, and soon the LDP began deliberating proposed legal revisions that would allow Japan to impose sanctions on the DPRK, in addition to travel restrictions imposed in January 2003.

With support from Abe, a group of younger LDP lawmakers revitalized a small study group looking to develop tools for the government to apply pressure on North Korea. A version of this group had been formed as early as 1999, but it flourished from early 2003 under the leadership of Yamamoto Ichita, a strong Abe supporter. The study group consisted of only six core members (including Kobayashi Yutaka, Kono Taro, and Suga Yoshihide), but they represented a broad range of thinking with regard to North Korea policy, indicating how large the "pressure faction" was growing within the LDP. One study group member described the background of the group: "Abe's individual support was critical, but we also had backing from key party task forces [including the LDP task force on the abduction issue and a team under it called the North Korea sanctions simulation team]. Koizumi did not want to apply pressure, but most of the public and the LDP wanted to, so this was a way to help satisfy both. We need cool, rational thinking to solve the problem, but we also need to give the government ammunition that it can use against North Korea, and creating a legal basis for sanctions was a way to do that" (interview 2005b). It was also good politics, as some scholars have noted. The LDP's policy platform for the November 2003 election featured a number of planned North Korea pressure tactics that appealed to the public and that might have helped to avoid a wider loss of LDP seats (see, for example, Samuels 2004).

Even though the idea of developing a menu of available sanctions was popular, there were still some influential politicians who resisted the study group's recommendations. "The [lawmakers who are aligned with MOFA or the Ministry of Economy, Trade Industry (METI)] fought us throughout. MOFA has generally been against sanctions, though they were not as involved in this process. The drafting of the bills really originated from the politicians, though we consulted regularly with the bureaucrats at MOFA, METI, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, and others" (interview 2005b). This politician-initiated legislative approach is relatively new in



### **Player Profile: Dialogue Faction**

Like its counterpart the pressure faction, the dialogue faction is not a formalized group or association, but it effectively describes a collection of politicians, bureaucrats, scholars, businessmen, and journalists who tend to favor dialogue with North Korea as a means to reconcile bilateral differences and to move toward normalized relations. The motivations for emphasizing dialogue over pressure vary depending on the individual. Many simply believe that dialogue is a superior tactic for negotiation, that flexibility and conciliatory gestures will prove more effective in the long run at helping Japan achieve its objectives than will threats and sanctions. Others worry that a more aggressive approach to the North Korean problem will further isolate Japan in the six-party talks and in the region. Still others see a more insidious campaign being waged by right-wing elements that are using the high profile and emotional appeal of the abduction issue to promote nationalist causes in the areas of education reform, defense policy reform, and ultimately constitutional reform.

#### **Key Players**

The most prominent member of this group is Prime Minister Koizumi himself, who has consistently resisted calls to apply pressure aggressively on North Korea over the abduction issue and instead has advised patience and pragmatism. Throughout his tenure when talks have stalled, Koizumi regularly has sent out feelers to North Korea's leadership regarding the resumption of dialogue, and he has traveled twice to Pyongyang in an effort to engineer a breakthrough.

His key allies in this policy approach include his political secretary Iijima Isao, Yamasaki Taku (former LDP vice president, head of the LDP's research commission on security, and possible candidate to replace Koizumi), Fukuda Yasuo (former chief cabinet secretary and possible candidate to replace Koizumi), Tanigaki Sadakazu (finance minister and possible candidate to replace Koizumi), Hosoda Kiroyuki (former chief cabinet secretary and chairman of the LDP's Diet Affairs Committee), Sugiura Seiken (former deputy chief cabinet secretary and justice minister), Aisawa Ichiro (acting LDP secretary general and head of the LDP's Abduction Issue Task Force), Nonaka Hiromu (former LDP secretary general), Noda Takeshi (former home affairs minister and chairman of the Japan-China Society), Kawaguchi Yoriko (former foreign minister and former special advisor to the prime minister for foreign affairs), Kono Yohei (former foreign minister and lower-house speaker), and Kato Koichi (former LDP secretary general). Among other allies are many in the opposition DPJ and several officials at MOFA, including former deputy foreign minister Tanaka Hitoshi and, to varying degrees, the current negotiating team led by Sasae Kenichiro (director general of MOFA's Asian Affairs Bureau), Haraguchi Koichi (ambassador in charge of Japan-North Korea normalization talks), and Yamamoto Tadamichi (ambassador in charge of the North Korean nuclear issue).

The dialogue faction is by no means a monolithic group. Iijima and Yamasaki are quite close to Koizumi, for example, while other politicians such as Kato and Kono are actively trying to counter Koizumi's influence in the LDP by promoting the revival of the party's traditional liberal wing (at least in terms of foreign policy) known as the Kochikai. Some (like Noda and Nonaka) are more open advocates of dialogue, while others (such as Aisawa and Tanigaki) have more nuanced positions. The bureaucrats are generally not in a position to lead the policy direction on this issue, and they do not all share the same opinion, but MOFA as an institution tends to support Koizumi's reluctance to implement unilateral sanctions.

What all of these people have in common is some degree of confidence (or at least hope) that dialogue can be productive under certain circumstances and perhaps also a belief that, although the abduction issue is important, the country's foreign policy is at some risk of becoming a hostage to public opinion (and its manipulation), to the detriment of Japan's national interest. A diverse group of generally liberal scholars and media are sympathetic to this point of view, as are many business leaders whose companies have significant economic interests in Korea or China. The primary challenge that dialogue supporters share is the illegitimate and unpredictable nature of Japan's negotiating partner (the Kim Jong-il regime) and the difficulty of identifying concrete benefits to Japan of achieving normalization with the North, even if the abduction issue is resolved.

Japan. It can be a time-consuming process, but it is has become more common in the Koizumi era, and it allows public pressure groups to be more politically influential.<sup>15</sup>

The process began by clarifying what kinds of sanctions or pressure tactics the government could employ under existing law, and in May 2003 the government announced that a new interpretation of the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law allowed it to completely ban remittances to Pyongyang. Moreover, Japan also determined that it could ban all trade activity with North Korea if necessary to comply with U.S.-led sanctions. In early 2005, a new Japanese law took effect that bans foreign vessels from Japanese ports

if they lack proper insurance. The law is designed to target North Korean ships that visit Japan. Other sanctions have been considered for snow crabs, clams, and clothing imported from North Korea, or possibly tightening certain immigration controls. In addition, Japan's foreign minister has suggested in the Diet that Japan could also tighten control over private money transfers to the DPRK, and the LDP is considering a new rule that would require all branches of Chosen Soren to pay property taxes. These kinds of measures have broad support in Japan, evidenced by a February 2005 petition signed by five million citizens calling for such sanctions.

But for all the talk of sanctions in the past six or seven years, Japan has not actually applied any such measures, mostly because Koizumi is reluctant to harm the prospects for multilateral and bilateral dialogue. In June 2005 Koizu-

<sup>15</sup> In interviews with lawmakers, two specifically mentioned the current debate over the future of overseas development assistance and the role of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation as another prime example of politician-directed legislation.

## **Player Profile: Cabinet Abduction Issue Task Force**

The Cabinet Abduction Issue Task Force (*Rachi Mondai Tokumei Chi-mu*) is a government organ attached to the Prime Minister's Office/Cabinet Secretariat. The task force is in charge of "formulating basic policies regarding the abduction issue and coordinating administrative affairs, in order to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the government's efforts on the issue."

### **The Origin and Members of the Task Force**

After his first visit to North Korea, Prime Minister Koizumi met with families of the abductees and emphasized the government's position that Japan would never normalize relations with North Korea without resolving the abduction issue. Still, given the dramatic public interest in the issue and the popular criticism of MOFA, Koizumi established the task force in September 2002, attaching it to the Ministerial Council on Japan-DPRK Normalization.

The task force's original members included the deputy chief cabinet secretary as chair,\* assistant chief cabinet secretary, security bureau chief at the National Policy Agency, deputy vice-minister at the Ministry of Justice, deputy director of the Public Security Investigation Agency, director general of MOFA's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, deputy vice-minister at the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and other members designated by the chairman. Later, in January 2006, membership was expanded to sixteen governmental agencies to include the Cabinet Office, the Financial Service Agency, the Defense Agency, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of the Environment.

### **Task Force Policy Progressions**

At its first meeting, on September 26, 2002, the task force adopted its Basic Policies to Deal with the Abduction Issue to facilitate interagency coordination for settlement of the issue (see appendix B for details). The core of the basic policies was to demand information from North Korea and to provide assistance for the victims' families through a coordinated government effort. Since then, until the latter part of 2004, the task force meetings were held relatively frequently, though mainly to simply reconfirm the basic policies and to facilitate information exchanges or updates regarding progress in negotiations.

When the public mood began to toughen in 2004 following the dispute over Yokota Megumi's remains, the task force also shifted toward a more pressure-oriented approach. According to the summarized agenda of the sixteenth meeting, in October 2004, the terms "economic sanctions" and "pressure" appeared for the first time. In December, the task force adopted six "pressure" policies including the suspension of humanitarian assistance to the North, strict law enforcement, and demands for detailed explanations concerning identifying and punishing those who were responsible for the abduction. At the eighteenth meeting, in December 2005, two more measures were added: continuing investigations of missing Japanese possibly abducted by North Korea and enhancing international cooperation on the issue via multilateral arenas (such as the UN).

**Taskforce Meeting Frequency**

Year	Meetings
2002 (Sep.-)	5
2003	5
2004	7
2005	1
2006 (-May)	4

### **Recent Situation**

The task force met only once in 2005, but it has been more active in 2006. At the twentieth meeting, in February 2006, the task force decided to change its official name in order to emphasize the whole government's determination to work together for a settlement of the abduction issue.† One recent focus is raising public awareness. In April 2006, the task force started a public relations campaign, printing two hundred thousand copies of posters on the topic.‡ They are also distributing English, Chinese, and Korean brochures to Japanese embassies abroad, foreign embassies in Tokyo, and international organizations. In addition, the task force established two new sub-committees. The first is the "law enforcement section" (*houshikkou han*) to facilitate interagency cooperation for more strictly enforcing existing laws, and the other is the "information collecting conference" (*jouhou shushu kaigi*) to collect and integrate information necessary for the settlement of the issue.§

The task force appears to be shifting toward a more pressure-oriented stance and establishing an identity as an interagency policy coordination and public relations center on the abduction issue.

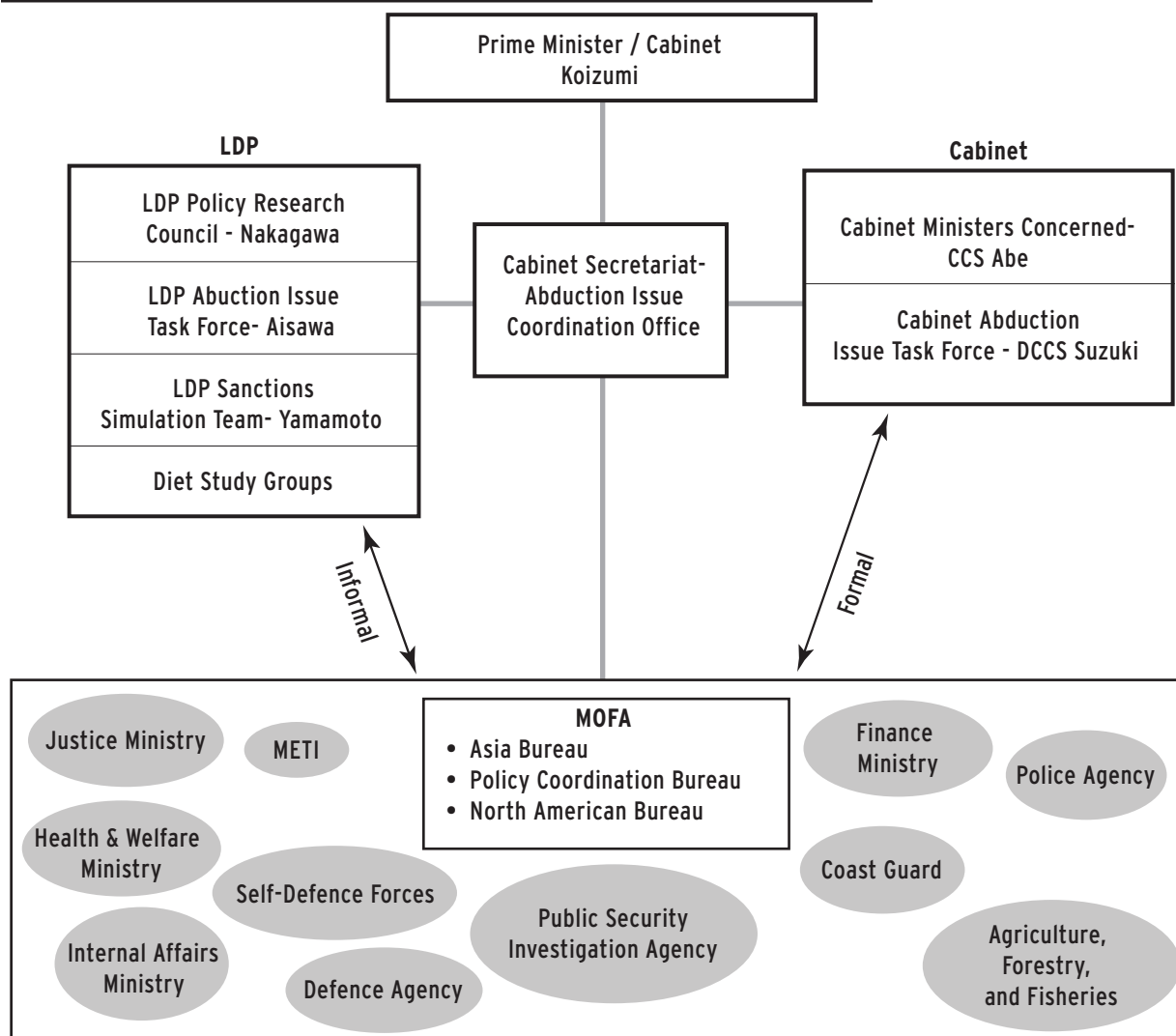
\* Those who have served as chairmen are Abe Shinzo (September 2002-September 2003); Hosoda Hiroyuki (October 2003-March 2004); Sugiura Seiken (May 2004-December 2004); and Suzuki Seiji (December 2005-present).

† The name was changed from Nicchou Kokkou Seijouka Koushou ni Kansuru Kankei Kakuryou Kaigi Senmon Kanji Kai (Rachi Mondai) (Special Executive Group (the Abduction Issue) at Ministerial Conference Regarding Japan-DPRK Normalization Talks) to Rachi Mondai Tokumei Chi-mu (the Abduction Issue Ministerial Team).

‡ The poster says, "'Abduction' Japan Will Not Give Up" ([Rachi] Nihon wa Misutenai). The posters will be hung in government offices, train stations, post offices, schools, air ports, and other public locations.

§ Members of the law enforcement section include councilor-class officials from the National Police Agency, the Financial Service Agency, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Coast Guard. The information collecting group includes the director of cabinet intelligence, the director-general of the National Police Agency, the director-general of the Public Security Investigation Agency, and the vice minister for foreign affairs.

**Sketch of Japan's North Korea Policy Making Apparatus as of May 2006**



mi said, “Each country is cooperating to deal with the abduction issue and the nuclear issue. We have to have such a view” (*Mainichi Shimbun* 2005). Before that, he told a Diet committee that “economic sanctions are not necessarily effective in terms of the abduction issue” (*Kyodo Tsushin* 2005a). When the Diet amended the Foreign Exchange Law in March 2004, Koizumi said, “A sword is not to kill people. It is best if you don’t have to resort to your last measure.” Some of this reflects Koizumi’s own personal pragmatism, but part of it also comes with the responsibilities of office. Even pressure advocate Aso Taro expressed reservations about implementing economic sanctions after becoming foreign minister in 2005, telling Kazoku-kai chairman Yokota Shigeru “I am worried about [unknown] survivors’ lives and cannot go to extremes...but the North Koreans want nor-

malization and will respond” (*Kyodo Tsushin* 2005b). U.S. officials are supportive of Japan’s tough stance, but the cautious approach to actually applying sanctions has also been appreciated in Washington.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that the government has not formally imposed sanctions against North Korea has frustrated and angered proponents of pressure, and they continue to lobby the public and lawmakers for quick, unilateral action. But groups like the Kazoku-kai and Suku-kai have taken some solace in

16 Then U.S. ambassador to Japan Howard Baker and former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage have, when sanctions fever seemed particularly high in Tokyo, publicly extolled the virtues of waiting for the right time to apply sanctions collectively, as opposed to unilateral action. Similar comments have also been passed along in private by White House and State Department officials (interview 2005c).

a number of punitive measures imposed by the central and local governments that fall short of formal sanctions (and by a similar approach in the United States). As noted above, the Chosen Soren has come under much tighter scrutiny and stiffer enforcement of tax and transaction laws.<sup>17</sup> Trade between Japan and North Korea has been slowed through tougher inspections (e.g., moving from sample extraction to X-raying all DPRK-related cargo), more rigorous safety and insurance requirements, and an increased number of designated items of concern under catch-all controls designed to limit dual-use exports (e.g., vacuum freeze dryers normally used in food processing, since they could also be used to test and analyze viruses for biological weapons). Komaki Teruo, a scholar on the side of dialogue, observed, “Economic sanctions are not what we are going to impose but what we have been imposing for a long time...[various actions such as catch-all regulations] mean that economic sanctions have already begun” (Nitchou Kokkou Sokushin Kokumin Kyokai 2005, 52).

In contrast to years past, North Korea policy making in Japan since the 2002 summit has been quite transparent and politically driven by the public, the pressure groups, and within the LDP. The pressure factions in the LDP have used a combination of party/political entities to dominate and lead the policy agenda on the issue: 1) the LDP’s Abduction Issue Task Force, 2) its North Korea Sanctions Simulation Team, 3) the LDP Policy Research Council, and 4) small, specialized study groups dedicated to the abduction issue or national security issues more generally. In terms of applying trade restrictions, the group benefited from sympathetic leaders at METI during much of this time, such as Hiranuma Takeo and Nakagawa Shoichi. The pressure faction is eager to respond to public opinion, but it has also proved willing to defer ultimately to Koizumi’s preference for delaying the formal imposition of sanctions. Pressure faction initiatives have also been blunted to some extent by MOFA and the process of bureaucratic consensus building. A couple of key policy mechanisms developed during this time maintain relatively strong central coordination and control and could be used in the future to enforce even greater bureaucratic discipline when necessary.

Immediately after Koizumi’s first visit to Pyongyang in September 2002, the government established the Committee of Cabinet Members Concerned with Japan-DPRK Diplomatic Normalization (Nitchou Kokkou Seijyoka Koushou ni Kansuru Kankei Kakuryou Kaigi, or DPRK Cabinet

Committee), chaired by the chief cabinet secretary. At the same time it also created what has become more of a working subgroup (at the director-general level), now called the Abduction Issue Task Force (Rachi Mondai Tokumei Chi-mu) and headed by a deputy chief cabinet secretary. The Abduction Issue Task Force has met twenty-two times since it was formed in 2002, and it has proved to be a useful government tool for clarifying policies related to assistance for abductees’ families and to bilateral or multilateral negotiations related to North Korea. This task force has also been able to confirm the status of investigations into the fate of suspected abductees and address various other North Korea-related issues. The task force is not a policy-making body, but it is a formal means of guiding and coordinating the work carried out in the LDP and in the ministries along the lines determined by the DPRK Cabinet Committee. The secretariat for the task force is a coordination office within the Cabinet Secretariat (Rachi Mondai Renraku Chosei Shitsu), where some of the informal coordination takes place before being presented at task force meetings. Even more informal coordination takes place among the ministries themselves before funneling their information to the Cabinet Secretariat.

In this way, North Korea policy making in Japan is being guided in a two-track, almost parallel, manner that is much more public and diverse compared to the 2002 or 2004 summit preparations, although it is still quite centralized. On one side is an LDP structure that has placed its own abduction issue task force and sanctions simulation team between a collection of ad hoc study groups and the LDP’s Policy Research Council. On the other side are the official Cabinet Committee and the Cabinet Task Force. Both sides communicate regularly with ministry officials, as well as with members of the Kazoku-kai and the Sukuu-kai. In fact, one member organization of Sukuu-kai was asked to gather information on behalf of the cabinet’s task force.<sup>18</sup>

Key aspects of this arrangement are close coordination at the top of the LDP hierarchy and the experience that Abe has on both sides of this equation (before as head of both the cabinet’s and the LDP’s Abduction Issue Task Force, and now as chair of the DPRK Cabinet Committee). The leaders of these groups are the leaders in the LDP and in the Cabinet including, of course, Koizumi and Abe, but also deputy chief cabinet secretary and chair of the cabinet’s Abduc-

17 In just one example, police investigators raided two Chosen Soren-affiliated businesses in October 2005 for the suspected sale of unauthorized drugs on the internet (Kyodo News 2005).

18 As noted earlier, the Sukuu-kai set up an independent investigating organization called the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea (COMJAN) in January 2003. This group has been re-investigating missing person cases for possible links to North Korea, and it cooperates officially with the cabinet’s Abduction Issue Task Force.



tion Task Force Suzuki Seiji, LDP Policy Research Council chairman Nakagawa Hidenao, acting LDP secretary general and head of the LDP's Abduction Task Force Aisawa Ichiro, and LDP secretary general Takebe Tsutomu, all of whom interact nearly everyday in one combination or another. Other key players include prime minister hopeful Yamasaki Taku and foreign minister Aso.

Though MOFA has been marginalized on this issue to some extent, and the ministry's direct communication with its counterpart in Pyongyang has been sporadic at best, it is still an important player not only in the management of negotiations (when they take place), but also occasionally in the opening of dialogue opportunities. One example came in 2005, when, according to a Japanese official attending a March 2005 IFPA workshop (Building Six-Party Capacity for a WMD-Free Korea) in Shanghai, China, for most of the year the Asian-Affairs Bureau was communicating with North Korea only via fax, as DPRK officials refused to talk to MOFA representatives at six-party meetings or by phone. The primary reason for the deep chill in relations at that time was an intense dispute over the authenticity of supposed remains of an allegedly deceased abductee that North Korea transferred to Japan in November 2004. When Japanese DNA tests on the bone fragments raised doubts about their authenticity, the government stated that the matter had to be cleared up before talks on normalization could resume. Eight months went by before bilateral talks resumed on the sidelines of a six-party meeting in August 2005.

In the first half of 2005, Asian Affairs Bureau Director General Sasae and his deputy Saiki used back-door communications channels via Beijing to convey Japan's interest in continuing dialogue. Eventually, MOFA learned that Pyongyang was also interested. But MOFA was still on a tight leash, and even though MOFA drafted their own plenary statements for the six-party meetings, the language had to be approved by the prime minister and the chief cabinet secretary (interview 2005d). This meant that the abduction issue was regularly mentioned at plenary sessions, much to the chagrin of the Koreans and the Chinese (and, to some extent, the Americans). MOFA worked hard to develop a better relationship with the pressure groups, however, and Saiki became a point person in this regard, able to speed dial Sukuu-kai or Kazoku-kai leaders anytime on his mobile phone to discuss recent developments or to arrange meetings. This helped to ameliorate public criticism and gave MOFA some room to maneuver.

In contrast to the negotiating breakthroughs in 2002 and 2004, the diplomatic approach to Pyongyang in 2005 was a more open and bureaucratic process. Three developments

contributed to the formal resumption of normalization talks in February 2006: 1) progress at the six-party talks in September 2005, 2) stepped up U.S. pressure on North Korean illicit activities, and 3) some diplomatic compromises by both North Korea and Japan. "The September [19] joint statement [at the six-party talks] was key to loosening things up," recalled one Japanese negotiator. "Then by November, North Korea was looking for a face-saving way to address [America's move towards applying] the banking sanctions, so we helped arrange a bilateral meeting on the subject [on the side of the six-party talks]" (interview 2005d). On the third point, the two sides managed to finesse the issue of settling the abduction issue "first" by putting "pending issues" up front and designing a three-track approach to the normalization discussion with "parallel working groups" to address diplomatic normalization, the past abduction of Japanese nationals, and North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. The phraseology originated with Sasae and the Asian affairs bureau, was approved by the prime minister and the chief cabinet secretary via the foreign minister, and negotiated face-to-face by Saiki and his North Korean counterpart in Beijing.

After all that time and effort, however, the five days of Japan-DPRK talks in February 2006 made no progress, and in some ways they even showed signs of backsliding from the Pyongyang Declaration. This was followed by the inevitable spin from the dialogue and pressure advocates in Tokyo, with the former suggesting that this was at least a start (albeit an unproductive one) for a new round of dialogue, and the latter arguing that the lack of progress and North Korean sincerity proved that additional pressure was long past due. Soon after the February meetings, the LDP and cabinet abduction issue task forces kicked into gear to look for ways to increase pressure on Pyongyang under existing law, and the LDP endorsed a bill in March to require the imposition of sanctions if North Korea fails to make progress in addressing human rights issues, including the abduction issue. Koizumi has indicated that he would still like to keep the dialogue going, but he is running out of time as his term comes to an end this fall. Where will that leave Japan-DPRK normalization, and what does this mean for U.S. policy makers as they face a continued stalemate in the six-party talks? The previous explanation about the key players and the evolving policy making process in Japan helps us to answer some of these questions, but much also depends on the likely course of regional and national trend lines affecting this issue.

# Regional and National Trends Affecting the North Korean Issue for Japan

Japan-DPRK relations is not an isolated issue, of course, and it intersects with (and is affected by) a wide range of regional and global geopolitical developments, as well as broader political and ideological struggles within Japan. The United States is closely connected to all of this because of its alliance relationships with Japan and South Korea, as well as its central role in the six-party talks and other related forums. The course of regional diplomacy is shaped by many factors that rarely seem to amount to a holistic strategy from the U.S. perspective, factors as diverse as the meeting between Kazoku-kai and Sukuu-kai members and U.S. lawmakers, President Bush's meeting with Yokota Megumi's mother and brother, U.S. ambassador to Japan Tom Schieffer's visit to the site where Megumi was abducted, and even U.S.-Japan collaboration on Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) or ways to curb international financial crimes involving North Korea. The regional trend has arguably been one of growing diplomatic separation between the United States and Japan on one side and China and South Korea, who have been much more forgiving of North Korea's behavior regarding human rights or illicit activities, on the other. To what extent does U.S.-Japan cooperation on various North Korea-related issues exacerbate this separation? How much of this is desirable from the U.S. vantage point? Is it accidental, intentional, inevitable, or just a price to be paid for prioritizing WMD non-proliferation, human rights, and democracy promotion as central tenets of America's foreign policy?

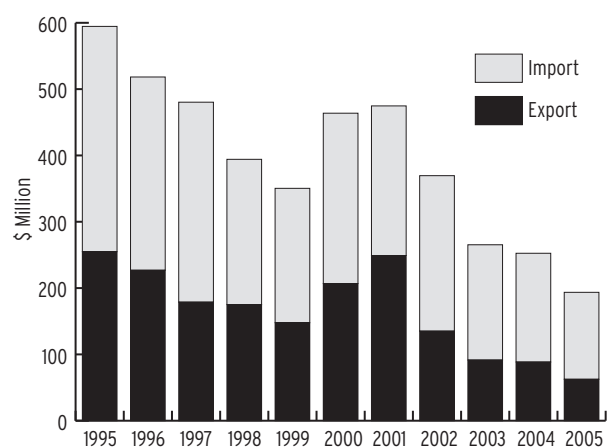
Regional diplomacy and regional security issues are also closely intertwined. The U.S.-Japan ballistic missile defense (BMD) development program is almost completely driven by the perception of a hostile and technically capable North Korea. China is, of course, a consideration, but not an overt one, and it is debatable whether or not the Japanese public would support \$1 billion per year for all BMD-related research and upgrades if the declared threat was the less immediate or less tangible one from Beijing.<sup>19</sup> The North Korean threat

19 Japanese government spending for all BMD-related expenditures (including upgrades to *Aegis*, *Patriot*, and *BADGE* systems, plus all research and development costs, as well as procurement of the *PAC-3*, *SM-3*, and other systems) has averaged about \$1 billion per year since FY 2004.

also prompted Japan's first-ever intelligence satellite launches in 2003 (with two more planned in 2006 and 2007), and more recently it has prodded the LDP to consider letting the government use outer space for defensive purposes, which would revise a Diet resolution from 1969 (*International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun* 2006a). The purchase of faster combat ships was another security-related expenditure in Japan attributed to the North Korean threat, and this acquisition has important implications for China and South Korea when it comes to potential naval clashes over disputed rocks, islets, and maritime boundaries.

U.S. policy makers should think in broad and ambitious terms about what they want to see happen diplomatically and strategically in Northeast Asia and how U.S. policy coordination with Japan vis-à-vis North Korea (among other policies, factors, and relationships) might affect those objectives. Japan's policy decisions in this regard are of course beyond Washington's control, but they are not beyond U.S. influence. Particularly as Japan prepares for a leadership change in the fall of 2006, now is an opportune time for U.S. policy makers to take stock of current trends and to work with their Japanese colleagues to better incorporate North Korea policy into a larger regional framework.

**Japan's Trade with North Korea Since 1995**



Source: KOTRA and Jetro

**Japan-DPRK Shares of Total Trade (%)**

	1995	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Japan-DPRK Trade/Japan's Total Trade	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.02
Japan-DPRK Trade/DPRK's Total Trade	25.9	22.4	22.3	17.8	12.7	8.5	7.1	4.8

Source: KOTRA and JETRO

**Trade and the Sanctions Card**

As noted in the introduction, Bush and Koizumi met in Texas in May 2003, talking about the need for “tougher measures” against Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program, and Bush pledged that “the United States will stand squarely with Japan until all Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea are fully accounted for” (*International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun* 2003). Since that time, the pressure faction in Japan has pushed consistently for the application of trade and financial sanctions as the manifestation of “tougher measures,” unilaterally if necessary, but Koizumi has been reluctant, and the default has been to other policies of economic tightening that fall short of sanctions. When combined with the ROK’s and China’s policies of engagement with the North, the resulting erosion of Japan-DPRK trade

relations has arguably left little economic leverage for Tokyo (and Washington indirectly) to use against Pyongyang.

Japan-DPRK trade declined from 1996 to 1999, largely because of the severe deterioration of the North Korean economy caused by the withdrawal of Soviet support and a series of natural disasters. Japan’s private sector was increasingly unwilling to ignore North Korea’s accumulated debt, which had begun to approach ¥90 billion (or over \$700 million). The dramatic downturn of bilateral trade since 2002 is mainly due to the second DPRK nuclear crisis and Japanese anger over the abduction cases (Cha 2003). In 2005, Japanese trade with North Korea recorded its lowest total in twenty-six years. Japanese exports to the DPRK in 2005 were down 74.9 percent and imports down 41.9 percent compared to 2001. Total trade with the DPRK in

**Japan's Main Export Items to North Korea (\$thousand)**

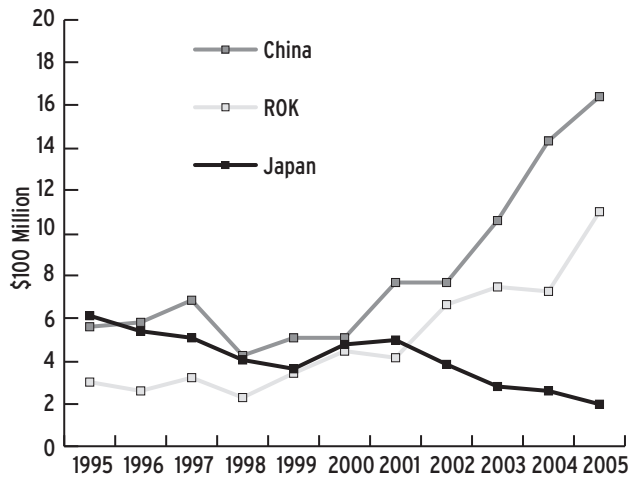
	Name of Item (HS Code)	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Motor vehicles (automobiles) (8703)	19,913	11,036	14,731	5,433	9,673	6,157
2	Woolen fabrics (5112)	18,544	16,284	14,336	7,310	4,511	1,643
3	Motor vehicles (trucks) (8704)	13,570	13,064	17,186	17,542	20,317	16,198
4	Petroleum (2710)	9,577	490	525	287	364	240
5	Electromagnets (8505)	8,376	4,422	3,718	2,366	1,715	873
6	Synthetic filaments (5407)	6,230	7,063	6,696	5,568	4,557	2,345
7	Electric generators (8502)	5,077	2,194	2,374	1,333	691	552
8	Insulated wire and cable (8544)	4,273	3,302	3,319	1,838	1,981	1,332
9	Motor vehicles (buses) (8702)	3,782	2,929	2,796	2,831	2,426	3,848
10	Mixed fabrics (5111)	3,403	2,612	1,389	980	336	272

**Japan's Main Import Items from North Korea (\$thousand)**

	Name of Item (HS Code)	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Mollusks (shellfish, etc.) (0307)	69,825	80,771	71,059	55,995	53,052	24,947
2	Men's clothing (suits, etc.) (6203)	47,273	41,302	41,725	24,844	14,359	6,400
3	Vegetables (mushrooms) (0709)	20,378	9,916	15,664	8,591	9,272	14,980
4	Electric transformers (8504)	16,857	11,300	9,540	12,024	16,810	14,020
5	Crustaceans (crab, shrimp etc.)(0306)	12,696	15,626	37,403	19,109	16,483	9,964
6	Coal (2701)	11,750	13,799	11,721	10,830	10,609	17,394
7	Pig iron (alloy/non-alloy)(7201)	11,227	2,804	4,109	4,260	8,596	8,356
8	Men's clothing (coats) (6201)	6,620	4,266	1,900	1,207	228	100
9	Natural magnesium carbonate(2519)	5,982	5,647	6,329	1,800	756	1,505
10	Insulated wire and cable (8544)	4,641	3,965	3,667	3,330	1,778	1,178

Source: KOTRA

### North Korea's Trade with China, ROK, and Japan



Source: KOTRA and ROK Ministry of Unification

2005 fell by 23.3 percent from 2004, and where just a decade ago trade with Japan made up over a quarter of North Korea's total trade, this figure has dropped to below 5 percent. U.S. trade with North Korea is even less significant, hitting about \$5.7 million in 2005, mostly from aid-related grain shipments.

The underlying cause of this decline is the overall state of bilateral relations, but it is also consonant with Japan's policies of tighter customs inspections, liability laws, export controls, and politicians' echoing the calls for DPRK product boycotts. Another measure along these lines involves the Japanese government's investigation of the finances of Chosen Soren, since Japanese imports from North Korea have been facilitated by its members. Traditionally Chosen Soren members have exported electronic components and clothing materials to North Korean joint-venture firms and then re-exported the finished products to large discount stores in Japan, but this economic activity has been declining. The drop in the textile and men's clothing trade has been particularly dramatic, as has the decline in seafood imports from North Korea and used motor vehicle exports from Japan.

The loss of trade with Japan has been more than compensated for by a rise in North Korean trade with South Korea and China (roughly tripling since 1995), reducing Japan's leverage further. Inter-Korean trade continues to grow through larger investments by the South in joint-venture projects such as the Kaesong industrial park and certain mining and other operations. At this point, it is hard to see how even a complete Japanese trade ban with North Korea would have a debilitating effect on the North Korean economy, such as it is. In early 2005, an LDP task force estimated that a complete halt to bilateral trade could cost

North Korea anywhere from \$200 million to over \$1 billion (or 1.25 percent to 7 percent of GDP) (Takahara 2005). The lower end of that deliberately wide estimate is more likely, if it can even reach that level, while the higher end makes for a better headline.

It is difficult to say for certain why Japan so far has held off imposing unilateral sanctions on North Korea. Koizumi's reluctance is the major factor, no doubt, but does he want to avoid sanctions because he is convinced that it is the wrong policy for Japan at this time, or because he is deferring to Washington's desire to not give Pyongyang more excuses for avoiding the six-party talks? The answer is probably both, but the latter reason certainly counted for something during 2005, when the newly installed U.S. chief negotiator, Chris Hill, was trying to jump-start multilateral negotiations. Foreign Minister Machimura Nobutaka reportedly told Kazoku-kai members in July 2005 that Japan was "desisting [from imposing sanctions]" out of consideration for requests by "a number of countries" so as not to disrupt the six-party talks. The United States was apparently one of those countries and probably the only opinion that Japan really cared about (Nishioka 2005a).

But MOFA itself has also preached caution regarding sanctions or other pressure tactics, even if it tries to shift the blame publicly to other countries. News reports in Japan described disagreements between MOFA and the Cabinet Secretariat, for example, over the naming of Saiga Tomiko as a newly created ambassador in charge of human rights in late 2005. The move was apparently initiated by Abe and intended to help internationalize the abduction issue and pressure North Korea on human rights, but MOFA tried to emphasize instead that the post was going to deal with broad issues of human rights (that is, not specifically targeted at North Korea), since it was sensitive to Pyongyang's reaction during a delicate time of positioning for further bilateral and multilateral talks (*Asahi Shimbun* 2006a). Of course, North Korea has stated many times that unilateral Japanese sanctions would be interpreted as a "declaration of war," and there is a credible threat of DPRK retaliation within Japan, most likely in the form of sabotage or even terrorism carried out by "sleeping" resident North Korean agents (interview 2005a). All of this combines to slow the momentum of the sanctions movement.

Given the lack of progress in the six-party talks and Washington's more aggressive campaign against North Korea's illicit activities and its poor human rights record, however, more overt pressure tactics or formal sanctions by Japan might now be diplomatically and politically easier to implement. When the United States targeted a Macau-based bank in late 2005



as a money-laundering concern because of its links to North Korea, MOFA officials and Japanese banks were quick to fall in line with the recommended punitive measures. Japan's ruling coalition, moreover, sent a human rights bill to the Diet in April 2006 that would require the government to impose economic sanctions on North Korea "when recognizing that there were no improvements in the abduction issue and other North Korean human rights abuses against the Japanese," which is aimed at reducing some of the prime minister's discretion in the matter.<sup>20</sup> The bill would also require annual public government reports to the Diet regarding its efforts to settle the abduction issue and establish a North Korea Human Rights Abuses Enlightenment Week. In addition, the government has given serious consideration to the idea of stricter visa requirements and limiting re-entry permits for North Korean residents in Japan as another form of pressure (interview 2005e).

Though estimates vary, it does appear that the current approach of countering North Korea's illicit activities is having an adverse effect on the Kim Jong-il regime, mostly by limiting its ability to execute dollar-based transactions and disrupting the stability of the country's currency. Still, few believe that these actions alone will be enough to change North Korean behavior, either with regard to its nuclear programs or the abduction issue. The impact of these countermeasures could be weakened further if North Korea and Japan were to make some notable progress on abductions, however unlikely such progress might seem at the moment. Even if Japan does not break significantly from a hard-line U.S. approach, it would likely end up easing some of Pyongyang's pain by scaling back on the pressure tactics it has been applying steadily since 2002, which would undermine the effectiveness of U.S. pressure to some degree. As one U.S. State Department official said in a 2005 interview, "I'm skeptical that [Kim Jong-il] will solve the abduction issue, but if he did, it would get tougher for the United States."

Overall, either applying or lifting economic sanctions or other pressure will probably only affect the negotiations with North Korea on the margins, especially while China and South Korea continue aggressively to engage the North. Moreover, the stronger the pressure becomes, the more animosity it will engender from China and South Korea. Ultimately, the most powerful tool at the allies' disposal is more than likely a positive one, rather than negative. The 2002 Pyongyang Declaration laid the groundwork for a large-scale economic aid package from Japan to North Korea after dip-

lomatic normalization, which many analysts suggest could be settled in the \$7 billion to \$9 billion range (after subtracting the DPRK debts owed to Japan). The aid would be provided in the form of bilateral grants and low-interest long-term government loans, which North Korea could use not only to restore industrial production, but also to build new infrastructure.

Some Japanese private sector investment might also follow, as plans already exist for development/expansion of export-processing zones along the North Korean coast at Rajjin-Sonbong, Rason, and Wonsan that were drafted with an eye toward post-normalization investment from Japan. World Bank and Asian Development Bank loans could also be forthcoming, and long-held UN plans to link the Korean Peninsula to a trans-Asian railway network could get a big boost. But all of this is only possible with U.S. and Japanese support. In the words of a White House official, "Any sort of deal, in the end, has to have Japan fully on board for all of the pieces to work" (interview 2005f). In this sense, U.S.-Japan solidarity vis-à-vis North Korea is critical to success. If either side cuts a separate deal with Pyongyang at almost any level, the other's leverage will be diminished. Together, the United States and Japan are much stronger than they are on their own. Of course, the potential effectiveness of the above-described incentives will only be realized when the ruling regime in Pyongyang decides that it wants them badly enough, and when it believes that it can accept them (based on international standards) and still control the potential negative impact on its means of power. If and when such a moment will come is far from clear, at this point. The goal, however, is to be ready to move when the opportunity arises.

## Regional Security Trends

At first glance, the national security implications of North Korea would appear to be an overriding consideration for Japan, and as indicated earlier in this discussion, numerous Japanese defense investments and U.S.-Japan alliance adjustments have been inspired and made politically viable by the North Korean threat: faster combat ships, the launching of intelligence satellites; revision of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines and enhancing interoperability in areas surrounding Japan; the BMD program; the Special Measures law (Yuji-Hosei); participation in PSI; and even the pondering of developing some Japanese pre-emptive strike capability (including missiles), as well as security-related aspects of proposed constitutional revision. Without the North Korean threat, for example, Japan would probably not be operating in the Indian Ocean or in Iraq, as it is to-

20 A translation of the title is "Bill on Response to Abduction and Other Human Rights Abuses Issues by North Korean Authorities" (see appendix C for details).

day. This phenomenon has not been lost on many in China and South Korea, even among those who support North Korea and who sometimes complain that Pyongyang's bellicose rhetoric counterproductively enables the very Japanese military buildup that it purports to counter.

Digging deeper, however, it seems clear that the defense and security community in Japan is not a substantive player in the policy-making process vis-à-vis North Korea, which many Americans would find surprising.<sup>21</sup> This certainly reflects Japan's unique constitutional restrictions and the traditional lack of the Japanese Defense Agency's (JDA's) involvement in nearly all formal foreign-policy debates since the Second World War, but it also suggests that the threat perception of North Korea is simply not as strong as advertised. As one JDA official explained, "There is a tacit consensus within the JDA that it should be more involved in North Korea policy making, but we are not thinking of pushing MOFA on this now" (interview 2005g). The JDA is involved in PSI-related planning with the United States, but even this activity is managed by MOFA's Disarmament and Nonproliferation Department, which occasionally finds itself in the uncomfortable position of having to mediate between officials from the JDA, the Coast Guard, and law enforcement agencies. This does not suggest a seamless integration of diplomatic and security professionals.

But even if bureaucratic circumstances in Japan marginalize the JDA from negotiations and policy making vis-à-vis North Korea, the Kim Jong-il regime is still considered to be a primary security concern, by both the government and the public. A recent Cabinet Office survey of the general public showed that Japanese are more concerned with Korea (64 percent) than with any other security issue. Terrorism and China were a distant second and third on the list (*International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun* 2006b). Nearly all of Japan lies within range of North Korean missiles, and the possible future marriage of DPRK missiles with nuclear warheads is arguably more troubling than Russia's or China's strategic nuclear arsenal, if only because Kim Jong-il is widely considered to be less predictable in the face of a U.S. nuclear retaliatory strike than would be Moscow or Beijing. North Korea has regularly probed Japan's coastal defenses, the potential for domestic sabotage is always there, and, like the United States, Japan is also concerned about global missile and nuclear material proliferation from the North. One Self-Defense Force SDF general offered, "I'm really not worried about a physical North Korean attack on Japan, but the weakness of the proliferation regime is a problem. The United States can't

be too naïve to think that Pyongyang won't proliferate" (interview 2005h).

Among Japanese defense planners and security-oriented politicians, if not the public, however, China's growing military strength attracts at least as much attention as North Korea. The potential future threat to Japan stemming from China is front and center in all of Japan's recent security policy documents, including the JDA's 2005 defense white paper and other reports put forward by the LDP Policy Research Council (2004), the prime minister's Council on Security and Defense Capabilities (2004), and the National Institute for Defense Studies (2006). Japan's defense position is made all the more unclear by the uncertain direction of the U.S.-South Korea alliance, which could bring about a further drawdown of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula and a transfer of wartime operational control of South Korean troops to Seoul, among other changes. At the very least, this will require a reworking of various U.S.-Japan contingency plans for Korea, and it is one of the factors contributing to discussions about alliance adjustments between Washington and Tokyo. All of this will have the likely effect of enhancing U.S.-Japan security cooperation, but it might also prompt Japan to develop its own independent military capabilities further.

There is some concern within Japanese defense and political circles regarding how much faith to place in the long-term durability of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the congruence of national interests. It is rare to see such questioning of America's commitment in public, but it is more readily offered in private, and it coincides with a rising sense of nationalism in sectors of Japanese society, mirroring a similar rise in Korea and China. "China is working to develop its own sphere of influence," explained one Japanese defense planner, "creeping to the Indian Ocean and avoiding a chokepoint [at the Strait of Malacca] by developing a [oil and natural gas] pipeline through Myanmar [from the port of Sittwe]. Is Washington too distracted in the Middle East to pay attention to China?" (interview 2005i). Similar comments have been made with regard to China's moves to develop rail links and a port agreement with North Korea in the northeastern part of North Korea, along the Japan Sea coast.

An exchange at a private, IFPA-led bilateral workshop also illustrated this abandonment fear. One Japanese participant argued that Japan could break from the alliance if it doubted American credibility during a crisis involving China, for example. An American participant admitted, "There could be a possibility that the United States will lack the will and the desire to engage militarily in Asia, given what we have to go through during the next five years [in the Mid-

21 A JDA representative only first joined the cabinet's Abduction Issue Task Force in January 2006.

dle East]. I do not believe that the United States will abandon Japan, but there is the possibility that the United States will be ambivalent in responding to [certain] scenarios. We may view them as Asian problems” (IFPA 2005). Some of these “problems” could include clashes over disputed islets, maritime boundaries, sea lanes, energy resource deposits, fishing rights, underwater surveillance, airspace, or other tensions that fall short of full-scale conflict involving Korea or Taiwan.

For some Japanese, there is fear that Washington might be too soft on China, placing greater weight on its bilateral trade relationship, or perceiving the need for China’s support at the UN on key global security issues, perhaps at the expense of Japan’s concerns. Others fear the opposite, that Washington might be too confrontational with China. “Japan cannot afford a hostile China, but the United States can tolerate that for a while,” said one senior military officer. Another added, “Washington does not have one view of China. We have to be prepared” (interviews 2005h and 2005i).

North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs, China’s growing military sophistication and maritime power, and South Korea’s uncertain commitment to its current alliance arrangements with the United States have all contributed to a greater Japanese sense of regional vulnerability. A stronger U.S.-Japan alliance, backed by more U.S. firepower in the region and more capable Japanese forces, helps to alleviate some of Tokyo’s concerns, but it also exacerbates the sense of division between Japan and the mainland, especially when combined with nationalist rhetoric on all sides. North Korea remains a double-edged catalyst for security-related change in the region, on the one hand legitimizing security reforms in Japan and breaking Korea away from the U.S.-Japan/U.S.-South Korea alliance system, and on the other hand fostering hope for some kind of regional security framework stemming from the six-party talks. If the six-party process continues to weaken, the United States and Japan will be left with fewer options to try to stem the rising tide of regional rivalry.

As Michael Green described in his book, *Japan’s Reluctant Realism* (2001), Japan emerged from the 1990s “more acutely sensitive to power balances in the region, particularly vis-à-vis China...[and it developed] a somewhat more Hobbesian and self-interested perspective.” Today, Japan’s realism is seemingly less reluctant but still quite fractured, and contrary to nations like those in NATO, which currently enjoy a security surplus, Japan is mired in a worsening security deficit without a clear policy response.<sup>22</sup> Some seek

to reduce the “threat source” piece of the equation, in part through a more conciliatory approach to China and other potential aggressors. Others seek to build up Japan’s own security capital to alleviate the deficit, either through close alliance with the United States or by itself (or some combination of the two). Japanese leaders are acutely aware that, one way or another, the security equation must be brought back into balance. Judging from Japan’s stagnant defense budget in recent years, an independent military build-up seems unlikely at this time.

### Six-Party Talks, Abduction Diplomacy, and the Nationalism Factor

Since the start of the six-party process in August 2003, negotiators from the United States, China, South Korea, North Korea, and Russia have generally tried to avoid the inclusion of so-called bilateral issues in the formal group discussions, which were designed to seek a permanent end to Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons programs in exchange for security assurances and economic assistance. Oftentimes the Japanese government lacked a bilateral channel of dialogue with the North, so it had only the multilateral sessions to demonstrate to Japanese voters its commitment to the abduction issue. Some in Japan thought that this tactic had more than just political value. Tanaka Hitoshi wrote that “it is a great success by the Japanese government to put Japan-DPRK talks into a huge framework of the six-party talks... [since] there is a mechanism in which progress in bilateral talks contributes to the purpose of the six countries” (Tanaka 2005). Yamasaki, in contrast, has said that the six-party talks are not the right forum to discuss strictly bilateral issues (*Chosun Ilbo* 2005).<sup>23</sup>

The six-party talks have been stalled since November 2005, however, and in the interim the process has indirectly taken on additional baggage in the form of spats about North Korean illicit financial activities, U.S. punitive measures, human rights concerns in North Korea, Chinese-ROK aid and engagement with North Korea, granting asylum in the United States for DPRK defectors, and the abduction issue. Among the more dramatic recent events, the Japanese government announced in April 2006 the results of DNA tests indicating that the husband of abductee Yokota Megumi was likely a South Korean thought to have been abducted in 1978, one of at least five hundred suspected ROK victims. Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe subsequently announced that the abduction issue now has “an international stretch,”

22 For the inspiration to characterize Japan’s security position as one of deficit, contrasted with surplus, I am indebted to Professor Watanabe Akio.

23 For more detail about the six-party talks, see IFPA’s current project on this topic “Building Six-Party Capacity for a WMD-Free Korea,” at <http://www.ifpa.org/projects/carnrok.htm>.

though efforts to internationalize the issue have been pursued for some time. It will no doubt be brought before the newly established UN Human Rights Commission, of which Japan, South Korea, and China are members. The prospects for addressing the abduction issue and North Korean human rights within a six-party or regional framework, however, are not good, primarily because South Korea has made a political decision to make engagement and North-South reconciliation a higher priority, on the theory that this will be a more effective human rights promotion strategy in the long run.

The ROK government, not wanting to upset its engagement policy with the North, abstained at a December 2005 UN vote on the first formal rebuke of North Korea's human rights record mentioning abduction victims. A month later, the South Korean ambassador-at-large for human rights, no less, criticized those countries that use "the human rights issue...as a political means to attack a certain individual, group or a country." To this he added, "Peace on the Korean Peninsula...must take a higher priority than the human rights issue" (Seo 2006). In May 2006, Vice Unification Minister Shin Un-sang said that political reform and economic progress, not external pressure, will improve the human rights situation in the DPRK, and the same month Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok stated that North Korea's efforts to resolve the abduction issue with Japan were being "underestimated" or unappreciated in Japan (Byun 2006). He also said he was "definitely opposed to any attempt" to topple the DPRK regime, which is precisely how Pyongyang (and many in Seoul and Beijing) views the motivation behind Washington's and Tokyo's push on the human rights and illicit activities issues.

Such a message is driven home when President Bush meets with Kazoku-kai members in the Oval Office, as he did in May 2006, together with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, Assistant Secretary of State Chris Hill, and special envoy on DPRK human rights Jay Lefkowitz. Bush called it "one of the most moving meetings since I've been the president." Such a lineup, noted a Japanese embassy official, "would be rare even for a meeting with [Koizumi]," or ROK President Roh Moo-hyun, for that matter (*International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun* 2006c). It is unlikely that the director general of MOFA's Asia bureau has ever had such a group consultation, and the fact that the White House is more willing to address the abduction issue at such a high level than it is to strategize in a similar way with six-party negotiators is dismaying to many in Seoul.

Not everyone in South Korea believes that the choice is simply between Korean reconciliation and human rights. After Japan's DNA announcement, one Korean newspaper

editorial lamented, "It is a moment of shame for South Korea that the Japanese government had to do what would have been our government's job: confirm the fate of one of our own" (*Chosun Ilbo* 2006). Still, it is no wonder why photo ops pressing North Korea on human rights issues are harder to arrange in Seoul than in Tokyo. Koreans are focused on reuniting their country, but there is also nationalism at play, as many see hypocrisy in Japanese calls for justice when only decades before the North's abductions took place, Japan was a brutal colonizer in Asia.

Nationalism and war-guilt politics are becoming significant features of regional diplomacy, and they are complicating multilateral efforts to denuclearize North Korea by dividing and diverting the participants. In April 2006, Japan and South Korea nearly clashed (literally) over proposed undersea mapping of terrain around disputed islets in the sea that divides the two countries. North Korea wasted no time in making this a topic of common cause with the South when they met the following weekend as part of their intermittent inter-Korean dialogue. Moreover, in a move echoing Japan's effort to internationalize the abduction issue, China is funding the expansion of a museum in Harbin dedicated to the activities of Japan's notorious Unit 731 that conducted medical experiments on Chinese prisoners during World War II. The museum's curator explained, "Our goal is to build it into a world-class war memorial and educate people all over the world. This is not just a Chinese concern. It is a concern of humanity" (Cody 2006).

This battle for the moral high ground in Northeast Asia helps to feed nationalist rhetoric within each country. For Japan this means that policy toward North Korea and the abduction issue has become closely interconnected with other right-wing causes such as politicians' visits to the Yasukuni shrine that honors Japan's war dead, territorial claims vis-à-vis China, Russia, and Korea, patriotic education reform, and preserving the male-only lineage for the emperor. Right-wing propaganda regularly interchanges these messages, punctuated at times by high-profile demonstrations, such as one man chopping off his hand in front of the National Diet building to protest Koizumi's North Korea policies or an attempted suicide outside the prime minister's office to demand that he continue visiting the Yasukuni shrine (*Mainichi Shimbun* 2006). LDP politician Kato Koichi lays some of the blame squarely on Koizumi himself. "More incidentally than not, Koizumi is implementing the bad nationalism policy. He visits North Korea when domestic politics are stalemated, such as the public road administration and the pension problem. Kim Jong-il, from his appearance, is a perfect figure to rouse nationalism" (Kato 2005).



Some in Japan have accused sympathetic politicians (like Abe) more directly of exaggerating the threat from North Korea and China to make it politically easier to enact security reforms and revise the constitution. Abe has responded, “Well, there may be such opinions, but I think it’s rubbish” (Onishi 2005). Most of the people interviewed in Japan for this project were also skeptical that there is an identifiable right-wing strategy along these lines, though they do admit that the net effect is similar. All of this puts dialogue faction members on the defensive, and even certain business interest groups, who would rather not concede all future economic influence in North Korea to China and South Korea, are hesitant to speak in conciliatory terms about the Kim regime.<sup>24</sup> The only exception to this trend has been in relation to the Yasukuni shrine issue, since it more directly threatens relations with Japan’s top trading partner (since 2005), China. The Japan Association of Corporate Executives in May 2006, for example, urged Koizumi and successor prime ministers not to visit the shrine, though Koizumi (and Abe, for that matter) rejected this advice. Most major Japanese newspapers (excluding *Sankei Shimbun* but including the conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun*) have also called on Japan’s leadership to find an alternative way to honor the country’s war dead.

Finally, with regard to Washington’s and Tokyo’s strategy for the six-party negotiations, although there is a good deal of consistency and resonance between the two, there are also some specific Japanese complaints about America’s approach that are worth noting, particularly within MOFA. The most common criticisms refer to U.S. “paralysis” in its policy making toward North Korea and its aversion to direct discussions. “There is insufficient coordination in the U.S. government [on this issue]...Hill had control, but he doesn’t seem to now...who speaks for U.S. policy on this? The financial sanction move was good...but we need to think of how to save North Korea’s face...and saving face is harder when too many people are talking.” Also, “Hill was in listening mode in November [2005 six-party meeting following the September joint statement]. Japan tabled a proposal, but the United States didn’t.” In addition, “Washington shouldn’t be so nervous about contact with North Korea. [The United States] has missed too many opportunities to talk with Pyongyang’s top negotiator” (interviews 2005d, 2005j, 2005k).

MOFA officials are not the only ones making such recommendations. Former U.S. chief negotiator and assistant secretary of state Jim Kelly also criticized what he called “an

unjust fear among some in Washington that we should avoid direct contact with North Korea” (Reuters 2006). The latest missed opportunity came in Tokyo in April 2006 on the sidelines of an academic conference, when Hill declined an invitation to dine informally with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei at the Chinese embassy there.

### The Role of Public Opinion

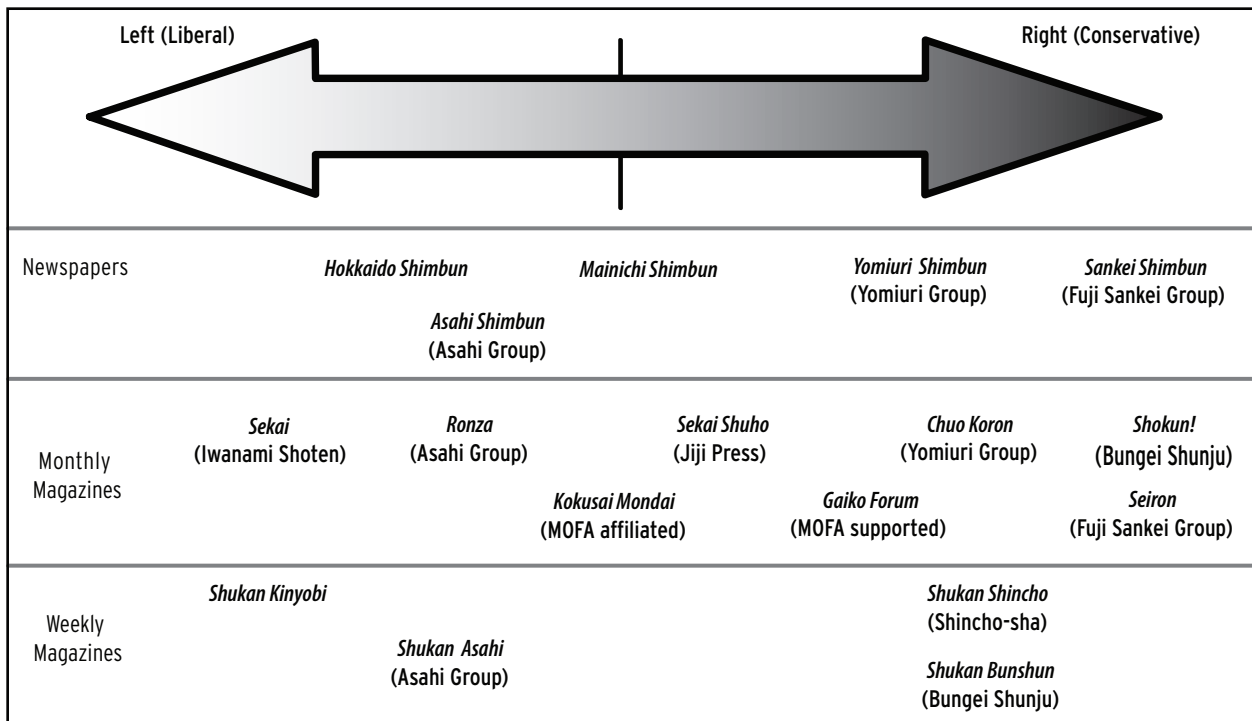
It is clear that public opinion in Japan, especially those voices from the *Kazoku-kai* and the *Sukuu-kai*, can exert significant influence on policy making towards North Korea. The whole country pitied the victims and their families, and at times large groups of voters have become vocal supporters of their cause. Moreover, there was a great sense of public indignation at the government’s failure to protect its citizens and to aggressively pursue the truth about their fate. The so-called wide shows (current affairs talk format) on television have been particularly influential, and they regularly cover the story as an ongoing national drama. It is important to note that the topic is more often covered by the current affairs bureaus of news organizations (*jyohou kyoku*), rather than their news bureaus (*houdou kyoku*), which allows greater room for opinion and editorializing (interview 2005l).

Pyeongyang has certainly recognized the importance of Japanese public opinion when it comes to bilateral relations. In December 2003, for example, when then-Secretary General Hirasawa of the Rachi Giren met with senior North Korean officials in Beijing, the North Korean side said “the most influential player vis-à-vis the abduction issue is not the Japanese government or MOFA, but the *Kazoku-kai*, the *Sukuu-kai*, the Rachi Giren and, what is more, public opinion. However hard we try to make deals with the Japanese government, if the *Kazoku-kai* says ‘No,’ deals would be overturned. To solve the issue, we thought we have to talk with someone who has influence on the *Kazoku-kai* and public opinion” (Hirasawa 2004).

Pressure groups probably reached their peak of influence during late 2003 and early 2004. The abductions and North Korea became an important campaign issue in the lower-house election in the fall of 2003, and the number of Rachi Giren members rocketed from 42 to over 180 after the election (or about one quarter of all Diet members). The groups accumulated more than a million signatures to request economic sanctions against North Korea and handed them to the prime minister’s office in April 2004. From June 2003 to late 2004, public opinion surveys showed that the percentage of voters who favored economic sanctions over

24 One Japanese commentator noted, “There is an atmosphere that everybody should say harsh things on the abduction issue, otherwise he would be treated as unpatriotic” (Nishimura 2004).

**Notional Sketch of Japanese Publications' (Publishers') Political Slant**



dialogue with North Korea grew from about 45 percent to more than 65 percent.

Though perhaps not as strong as they were two years ago, the pressure groups are still a powerful force, and the lack of diplomatic progress in the region drives and enables them. They want to include progress on the abduction issue as an additional condition (beyond denuclearization, for example) for North Korea's engagement with the world. As Sukuu-kai vice chair Nishioka wrote, "In the near future, it is certain that the UN Security Council will discuss the North Korean nuclear issue. Japan should take advantage of its diplomatic influence to add a phrase 'member countries must keep on imposing economic sanctions until North Korea returns Japanese and South Korean abduction victims' into the resolution. ...it is important to put the abduction issue down with the nuclear issue" (Nishioka 2005b). From the U.S. perspective, if this were really to happen it would be disadvantageous, and it should be resisted in Tokyo and Washington. Even the aforementioned human rights bill under consideration in the Diet could be problematic if it does not provide enough flexibility to respond positively to promising talks on the nuclear issue. The House of Representatives passed the bill in June 2006.

Public opinion, however, is not an insurmountable obstacle to Japan-DPRK normalization, though it will be near-

ly impossible to overcome without some help from North Korea. According to a MOFA official, "Most Japanese believe that some abductees are still alive in North Korea, and they want their government to press for their return. Ultimately, Japan needs a demonstration of a change of heart in Pyongyang" (interview 2005). Koizumi always kept his distance from the pressure groups and generally avoided meeting with Kazoku-kai or Sukuu-kai members. As a result, he put himself in a position where he had enough political room to take advantage of a North Korean overture, should it come about. These two variables, DPRK flexibility and Japanese flexibility, will be required for a solution, so Japan's new leadership will need to consider how it prepares to respond if an opportunity presents itself. Koizumi's 2004 visit to Pyongyang is instructive, in this sense.

In response to the outcome of Koizumi's second North Korea visit, as noted earlier, the main pressure groups were openly and strongly critical. Kazoku-kai vice secretary general Masumoto Teruaki said, "Doesn't the prime minister have any pride, deceived twice by Kim Jong-il? This is the most humiliating diplomacy since Kanemaru's visit." Then Rachi Giren chairman Hiranuma and Secretary General Nishimura Shingo said that this visit was graded below fifty on a scale of one to a hundred (*Shokun!* 2004). Despite this criticism, opinion polls showed that about 60 percent

of the public approved Koizumi's handling of the visit, and many made protest calls or sent critical faxes to the pressure groups' offices. A MOFA official offered one explanation for this phenomenon: "The change in expectation was key. The day before Koizumi's 2002 visit, the press was generally optimistic, and *Fiji Press* reported that up to seven abductees could return with Koizumi, and Megumi's name was mentioned. The public's expectations in 2004 were much lower, so it became harder to criticize Koizumi" (interview 2005l).

Finally, it is fair to say that "public opinion" itself can be an elusive concept. Even when polling is used to gauge public opinion, it does not explain well the depth or strength of expressed opinions, the degree to which it can be affected by unforeseen events, or how to predict the popularity of politicians versus their policies. Koizumi, for example, regularly received high support ratings for his handling of North Korea policy, despite his open and steadfast reluctance to impose economic sanctions, which was also favored by the majority. Public opinion regarding policy toward North Korea, moreover, is highly susceptible to changes in Japan's threat perceptions vis-à-vis its neighbor. Additional DPRK

missile launches over Japanese airspace or a DPRK test of a nuclear weapon would likely diminish the prominence of the abduction issue in the public's mind when it comes to negotiating priorities.

Either way, the thoroughly political nature of the North Korea problem in Japan makes it a unique foreign policy issue for U.S.-Japan policy coordination. The ruling party's or the ruling coalition's top political leadership cannot afford to leave the issue in the hands of MOFA, which means that Japanese politicians will have an over-weighted role to play when it comes to North Korea. Consequently, more so than with other foreign policy issues, U.S.-Japan consultations at the political level regarding North Korea are crucial, in addition to State Department-MOFA coordination. These consultations, moreover, need to look at the North Korean issue specifically as it relates to the future of the region as a whole, and they should examine critically how near-term tactics are likely to affect their long-term strategy. This will be especially important during a time of political transition in Tokyo following the expiration of Koizumi's term as LDP party president this fall.

# North Korea Policy Making in Post-Koizumi Japan

Koizumi's term as LDP president, and thus his term as prime minister, ends in September 2006. Despite rumblings within the party that it might be wise to offer some sort of extraordinary extension, perhaps until after the upper-house election (for half of those seats) in July 2007, Koizumi has stated publicly that he will step down on schedule. Koizumi is Japan's third-longest serving post-war prime minister, and he has had the longest tenure since Sato Eisaku in 1972. The fact that Koizumi's long and stable run followed a particularly unstable period in Japan's political history (ten different prime ministers in thirteen and a half years), underscores his own accomplishments and the importance many place on the selection of his successor. Given the importance of high-level political decision making for North Korea policy, the choice could be particularly influential on this front.

The new LDP president will be chosen by a party-wide electoral college made up of LDP Diet members and representatives from prefectural chapters (based on the results of LDP voter elections in each prefecture). Thus, support from the LDP candidates' fellow lawmakers is an important factor, but LDP voters in the prefectures can also help to sway the decision. Abe is the clear frontrunner to succeed Koizumi, but other possible candidates include Fukuda, Tanigaki, Aso, Yamasaki, and a few other younger lawmakers such as Kono Taro. A recent *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll indicated that general voters favored Abe over Fukuda by 40 percent to 23 percent, but Abe's support rate grows to 54 percent among the all-important LDP voter category (*Daily Yomiuri Online* 2006). An Abe-Fukuda race would be unusual for the LDP in the sense that both men are members of the same (Mori) faction. Mori would prefer to see the faction unite behind one candidate, preferably Fukuda, given his seniority and the good chance that the next prime minister will face politically tough decisions such as a consumption-tax increase (thus "saving" Abe for the future). Koizumi, however, sees factions as an LDP relic and has publicly encouraged Abe to run for the post, if he wants to. Aso is a member of the faction led by Kono Yohei (Kono Taro's father), while Tanigaki and Yamasaki lead their own factions.

In the context of Japan-DPRK relations, conventional wisdom suggests that an Abe victory would give the pressure faction the upper hand, but many of those interviewed for this project believe that Abe's approach toward North Korea would more closely resemble Koizumi's in substance than it would his own more aggressive and uncompromising

rhetoric to date. Moreover, reminiscent of President Richard Nixon's historic trip to China in 1972, several Diet members, journalists, and diplomats thought that Abe would be in a better position to realize Japan-DPRK normalization than would any other candidate for prime minister, given his pressure faction ties and credibility on the issue. Whether or not this reflects a certain amount of wishful thinking on the part of dialogue proponents remains to be seen, but at least a few pressure advocates concurred. The idea that North Korea's chance for normalization with Japan ends with the Koizumi administration, therefore, seems exaggerated. Abe has had a hand in many recent appointments within the LDP and the Cabinet Secretariat, and he is perhaps the best connected on this issue throughout the government to minimize open criticism of potentially aggressive moves.

Fukuda's advantage regarding North Korea could be that, at age 70, he is less concerned with his future political career and might be willing to absorb some public criticism on the issue (to help protect the party as a whole) for the purpose of furthering Japan's national interests, broadly defined.<sup>25</sup> Fukuda has certainly been clear in his position that Japan needs a new diplomatic policy for Asia that reaches out more to China and Korea, essentially based upon his father's Fukuda Doctrine of the late 1970s. Either way, a sincere effort by Pyongyang is still a necessary condition for success. On the Japan side, the first sign to look for is how tightly the new prime minister embraces the Pyongyang Declaration as the basis for normalization. Fukuda was closely involved in its creation, but Abe was not.

Similar to Fukuda, Tanigaki has been critical of Koizumi's Asia diplomacy, vowing to fix "abnormal relations" with China and South Korea (*Japan Times* 2006). Yamasaki has also emphasized the view that improving relations with China is necessary for Japan to solve the North Korean issue and to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In fact, on the surface, the "Asia diplomacy" issue has become a focal point of broad policy disagreement within the LDP, embodied by the question of whether or not a prime minister should visit Yasukuni shrine, which clearly divides Abe and Aso from Fukuda, Tanigaki, and Yamasaki.

As noted above, the media and the business community have both weighed in on the Yasukuni issue, and in the summer of 2005 backers of each position established com-

<sup>25</sup> Abe was born in September 1954.

peting Diet study groups led by Kato Koichi, Noda Takeshi, and Komura Masahiko on the anti-shrine-visit side and Matsuhita Tadahiro, Yamatani Eriko, and Furukawa Yoshihisa on the pro-visit side. It is important to recognize, however, that LDP lawmakers and voters will probably be dwelling on more fundamental concerns about the future of the party come September, as this election could hasten the demise of LDP factional politics and help to determine the relative strength of traditional interest groups for years to come. Winning elections is still the primary goal of the party, and the elevation of seasoned lawmaker Ozawa Ichiro to head the opposition DPJ has sharpened the LDP's focus on this function. Recent polls indicate that the public is more concerned with issues such as the low birthrate, aging society, economic reform, and a growing gap between the rich and poor, than they are with improving diplomacy (*International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun* 2006d).

### The Cabinet, Factions, and Post-Koizumi Politics

Factions, or formal associations of lawmakers within a party organized around a senior leader, were a mainstay of LDP politics for decades, until a growing portion of the voting public began to view them negatively in the late 1990s. At first, LDP leaders simply proclaimed the dissolution of factions in order to placate public criticism, even though they continued in practice. Electoral reforms (mostly the introduction of single-seat districts) undermined some of the factions' utility, and then Koizumi was elected in 2001 with a reform agenda that included "defactionalization." During his tenure, Koizumi has employed a variety of tactics to weaken the factions' influence on the LDP and to concentrate power in the hands of top party executives, such as bypassing factions when deciding on cabinet appointments, trimming the number of party research commissions and special committees, and introducing two-year term limits for the research commissions' chairmen. Koizumi's faction-busting initiatives have been popular with the voters and a reform-minded block within the LDP, but they have also engendered a backlash within the party that is focused on rolling back, or at least stopping, this trend.

Former LDP secretary general Kato Koichi, for example, is leading an effort to revive the previously dominant Kochikai faction (to challenge the now influential Mori faction), in part by creating yet another LDP study group on Asian strategy in March 2006 that reunites many of the old Kochikai members including Tanigaki, Kono Yohei, and others (Oda 2006). Kato has written that "the LDP's political factions...were not so bad when I see how they functioned...

each faction had its characteristics. In the multi-seat electoral system, politicians could speak their minds on issues... but with the single-seat system, arguments have to please everyone and be safe. In diplomatic issues with clear public opinion, such as North Korea and abductions, one cannot go beyond generalized remarks" (Kato 2005, 42-43).<sup>26</sup> This is in some ways a traditional power struggle, but it also reflects genuine concern and disagreement about the direction of the party with regard to Asian diplomacy, the pace and nature of economic reform, and the party's relationship to the exercising of executive power.

In the past, factional power tended to determine the direction of the LDP's policies, not the other way around. Cabinet posts and cabinet decisions were in a sense brokered by the LDP factions' leadership, based upon policy content developed largely by the bureaucracy. Today, however, there is a more direct connection between the party, its policies, and accountability at the polls, which is reversing the traditional equation. This was certainly the trend under Koizumi, as the Japan-DPRK case demonstrates, and it could either be fortified or diluted depending on who becomes the next LDP president. Some might argue that this trend is larger than Koizumi, since it is more than likely an organic result of electoral and administrative reforms undertaken over the last several years. This is probably true to some extent, but Koizumi no doubt accelerated the process, evidenced not only by some of the measures noted above, but also by the growth in size and influence of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office. The number of bureaucrats working at the Cabinet Secretariat, for example, has grown during his tenure from under 380 to about 1,200 (*Daily Yomiuri Online* 2005). As the party's research commissions have weakened, they are being overshadowed by stronger, issue-oriented offices and task forces within the secretariat (see, for example, Shinoda 2004).

Koizumi's appointments at the ministries, such as MOFA, have also had an effect. One (albeit biased) ex-MOFA official explained, "During the nine months of Tanaka Makiko's term as foreign minister...due to her hostility against [Diet member] Suzuki Muneo, [MOFA official] Togo Kazuhiko, and me, the 'geopolitical camp' [at MOFA] disappeared... and the 'Russian school' was cleared of MOFA top officials. Then the downfall of Ms. Tanaka led to a retreat of 'Asian-

26 The way Kato described it, "the Nakasone-faction was more 'Japanism'-oriented, Fukuda was conservative, Miki was liberal and close to the Socialist party, Kochikai was internationalist and economic-focused, and Tanaka was mainly about public construction policy, intra-party coordination, vote-getting, and fundraising."



ism,<sup>3</sup> and the influence of the ‘China school’ became limited. Only the ‘pro-U.S. line’ survived” (Sato 2005, 118-19). Sato has an ax to grind, given his arrest in 2002 stemming from a scandal regarding the misuse of special committee funds, but he describes some aspects of MOFA’s turmoil well. The Koizumi years have been a traumatic time for MOFA for a variety of reasons, and although U.S. influence in the matter might be limited, U.S. officials should recognize that Washington does not necessarily benefit from an unbridled ascension of pro-U.S. diplomats in the organization. It could further feed into the China-Korea versus U.S.-Japan division noted earlier, and the United States can benefit at times from well-positioned MOFA officials with high-level connections in Beijing, Seoul, and Moscow.

### Lessons from Vietnam

The U.S. experience of normalizing relations with Vietnam in the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s is an interesting case study when compared to the Japan-North Korea situation, and there are perhaps some useful lessons for post-Koizumi Japan. Some of the similarities are obvious and striking: the antagonistic history, the interconnection of different strategic, political, and humanitarian issues, the role of domestic and family lobbies, the lack of trust, and even the strong belief at one point that some citizens were still alive in the other country (for details on this case study, see Schoff 2005b). But before suggesting that the history of U.S.-Vietnam normalization is somehow a ready guide for Japan and North Korea, some profound differences must be considered.

First, Vietnam was (is) not governed by a communist monarchy in the same sense that North Korea is ruled by the Kim family. Vietnam’s adoption of *doi moi* (fundamental renovation policy) in 1986 represented a key strategic and political decision made by a government with far more legitimacy than the Kim Jong-il regime currently possesses. Second, though the comparison of Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia to the nuclear issue, and of prisoners of war/missing in action (POW/MIAs) to Japanese abductees has some validity, the fact is that North Korea’s nuclear programs pose a much wider and more significant threat to the region and the world. Further, the United States was not threatened by Vietnamese missiles.

Moreover, the abduction issue is not the moral equivalent of the POW/MIAs, who were taken or lost during wartime and not in the context of the glaring and ongoing human rights violations that are occurring in North Korea today. It’s worth remembering, however, that at the time (particularly the mid-1980s) the Vietnamese were often demonized in the United States for continuing to violate the prisoners’ rights

(some of whom were thought to be still alive, as shown in opinion polls of the time and vividly portrayed in such popular movies as *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) and *Missing in Action* (1984)). And the influence of the POW/MIA interest groups was quite strong and emotional, much as that of the abductee interest groups in Japan. To this day, for example, most public buildings in the United States (federal and local) fly a black POW/MIA flag (the symbol of the National League of POW/MIA Families) alongside the American flag.

But a couple of useful lessons can be taken from the U.S.-Vietnam experience, and they point to the challenges that await a new prime minister. First, the fact that this is a long and drawn-out process is not surprising. It took the United States about twenty years to normalize relations with Vietnam, and the circumstances were arguably much easier to deal with. If we say that Japan-North Korea normalization only began in earnest in 1990 or 1991, then we could be a decade or two away from resolution, even with a *doi moi*-type of decision in Pyongyang.

Second, an incremental process can be effective, and all issues do not need to be strictly linked to each other. Japan will need to save a big carrot for the end, such as a multi-billion dollar aid package, but it should be prepared to give up some things along the way. Even though Vietnam had not completed its withdrawal from Cambodia until 1989 or signed the peace accords until 1991, for example, it was still working with the United States on locating and returning remains, and the United States was making some minor (though noticeable) concessions, such as encouraging humanitarian assistance to Vietnam.

Third, it will be necessary to validate politically (by some authoritative group in Japan with a role similar to that of the U.S. Senate Select Committee in the early 1990s) that there are no current, undiscovered cases of abductees still living in North Korea. It is not clear that any such cases exist, but it will be necessary to verify this someday, and North Korean cooperation is required. This authoritative validation is necessary to bound the problem and to limit its open-ended nature.

Fourth, some voice must emerge in Japan (similar to the business community in the United States during normalization with Vietnam) that can make a public case that broader national interests beyond the abduction issue are at stake. The business community probably will not take this on in Japan’s case, but the task could be assumed by a national security lobby that points out the wider benefits to Japan of greater calm and stability in Northeast Asia. Some of the potential LDP candidates for prime minister have already

started to make such arguments in broad terms as part of their informal campaigns for the post.

The public needs to hear that the process of developing more bilateral ties and multilateral involvement in North Korea is potentially the most effective means to satisfy the needs of the affected families regarding information about the fate of their loved ones. Further, a more specific acknowledgement must be made to the public (for the sake of context) that South Korea has also suffered abductions at the hands of North Korea, and more widely that Japan also inflicted suffering in the past against the North, and that in some ways the only difference between the two (North Korean transgressions against Japanese and Japanese transgressions against North Koreans) was a matter of decades. Again, this is only possible once the issue has been substantially contained in the sense that no new abduction cases are suspected or anticipated.

Finally, Japan will need to create a process whereby the humanitarian issues can be effectively separated from the other issues of denuclearization and normalization. This is not to say that Japan would normalize relations before the satisfactory resolution of the abduction issue, but it would allow discussions on both issues to move forward without being directly linked to each other. In a way, the United States did this with China when it granted permanent normal trade relations in the 1990s. Washington created a panel of politicians and experts to continue monitoring and lobbying for human rights in China, while at the same time allowing other aspects of the relationship to move forward. In this sense, the recent trend toward internationalization of North Korea's human rights performance is a potentially useful and altogether appropriate step, though it needs to engage Europe, Australia, the UN, and South Korea more directly and win at least the acquiescence of China and Russia.

Others have also looked at the U.S.-Vietnam case and rightfully pointed out that there are lessons for North Korea as well. "Vietnam noticed that their enemy is not the United States but instead it is inside. Since then, Vietnam promoted full-fledged internal reform and the *doi moi* policy. By its own initiative it improved relations with the United States, and now we see a Vietnamese economy full of hope. I think the North Korean regime should learn from the Vietnam case" (Yun 2005).

### Implications for the United States

This analysis of Japan's North Korea policy making reveals some important issues and trends for U.S. policy makers to consider as they craft their own approach to the DPRK, in coordination with Tokyo and other allies. Because some of

these trends are larger than the DPRK issue itself, they can also be useful for Washington as it consults with Tokyo on other foreign policy matters. The implications for the United States appear to be twofold. The first set concerns concrete, tactical decisions related to the six-party talks and resolving (or at least containing) the North Korean nuclear issue. The second set connects more broadly to America's future vision for the East Asia region (in the context of U.S. national interests and the U.S.-Japan alliance) and bilateral management of U.S.-Japan relations in pursuit of that vision. This study has also produced some policy recommendations for Japan regarding North Korea, at least from a U.S. perspective, so these are also touched on below.

One key question is how closely to link the abduction issue and Japan-DPRK normalization in some way to the six-party talks and the nuclear issue. One could conceive of such a linkage as part of a "more-for-more" approach, which tries to put all the incentives on the table at once in exchange for DPRK denuclearization and resolution of issues blocking Japan-DPRK and U.S.-DPRK normalization. The joint statement of the fourth round of the six-party talks in September 2005 does mention this connection, albeit in an indirect way: "The DPRK and Japan undertook to take steps to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of the settlement of unfortunate past and the outstanding issues of concern" (U.S. Department of State 2005). Japan understands that it could lose a significant amount of negotiating leverage with North Korea if the value of its anticipated aid package (linked to normalization) is diluted by foreign direct investment from other sources that could flow upon successful denuclearization. That is the motivation among many in Japan for internationalizing the abduction issue and keeping it tied to the six-party process. The prospect of a multi-billion dollar aid package from Japan, moreover, significantly sweetens the pot for North Korean denuclearization if negotiators try to address all issues at once.

From the U.S. perspective, however, adding the abduction issue as a condition for six-party success, as envisioned by Japanese pressure groups, complicates the negotiating equation and raises the diplomatic cost to North Korea, necessitating additional measures of compensation. Maybe such a more-for-more approach can work, but it seems overly ambitious under current circumstances, and it raises the probability that a solution will be delayed and that North Korea will remain a *de facto* nuclear weapon state for the foreseeable future. The human rights agenda should be pursued in a multilateral fashion, but outside of six-party talks, since nearly all the parties interpret the substance of that agenda

differently. Even Washington and Tokyo have differences on this point, as bilateral consultations have revealed. One State Department official explained, “Japan needs to understand the broader human rights agenda [which includes religious freedom and international monitoring, among other issues]” (interview 2006b).

There seems little doubt that the political right wing in Japan has found in the abduction issue and Kim Jong-il its most marketable issue in terms of fundraising and political support. Although the abduction issue seems to be waning as a barrier to action, it is still a deterrent, akin to a flimsy fence confining a bull in a field. The bull is strong enough to overcome the obstacle, but there must be something significant to draw or push him through the fence to the other side, otherwise he is content to stay where he is. If the only way for dealing with Kim is face-to-face, then Koizumi (or his successor) is in a difficult position without some progress on the nuclear issue or the abduction issue, and perhaps this should be the objective of six-party or Japan-DPRK negotiations (to create enough political space for a breakthrough at the opportune time). Overall, this puts Japan in a passive position vis-à-vis North Korea, making it dependent on events and the actions of others. Alternatively, some increase in the threat perception (a missile launch or a nuclear test) could force the issue in the opposite direction.

There are some actions on the margins that can be taken. In exchange for some minor economic support (or a pledge by Japan to forgive some DPRK debts), North Korea could allow more family members of abductees to go to Japan (in particular, Megumi Yokota’s daughter, who might (or might not) continue to state that her mother did, indeed, die in North Korea). North Korea could launch another, more intensive, investigation about the issue, and maybe send back to Japan the Yodo hijackers or Red Army members for prosecution.<sup>27</sup> North Korea stated in July 2004 that it is not against the repatriation of the hijackers, and in bilateral talks with Japan in February 2006, Pyongyang reportedly asked Japanese officials to meet with them directly to discuss the terms for their extradition to Japan (*Kyodo News* 2006b). Some progress on this front, combined with the institutionalization of the North Korean human rights issue at the UN level, could help to de-link abductions from the nuclear issue. Developments along the lines outlined above might also provide some justification for U.S. removal of North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism.

27 The so-called Yodo hijackers are four of the original nine Japanese Red Army Faction members who hijacked a Japan Airlines plane in 1970 and who remain in North Korea.

Overall, the United States would prefer such a de-linkage, since it makes it easier for Washington to argue for de-linkage on its part (both to push for human rights and religious freedom in North Korea and to punish criminal activities). A fundamental problem for the United States in its negotiations with North Korea is that DPRK denuclearization is not a sufficient condition for U.S.-DPRK normalization, which runs counter to North Korea’s primary objective for the six-party talks. U.S. officials have stood by Japan on the abduction issue in the six-party talks, but this is mostly out of respect for Japan, not because they believe it is an effective negotiating strategy, as it limits flexibility.

This is not to suggest that Washington should try to remove entirely the abduction issue and Japanese public opinion from its calculations regarding North Korean diplomacy. This is neither politically viable in Japan, nor is it necessary. On the contrary, U.S. solidarity with Japan on the abduction issue and other human rights issues serves to underscore the common values that help to bind the two nations. It is a delicate matter, however, to press the human rights agenda in a way that does not give Pyongyang diplomatic cover to avoid dealing with pressing regional security issues (by labeling it a component of a “hostile policy” towards it), as well as adhering to its bilateral and international agreements. The United States and Japan must put themselves in a position to proceed at varying speeds on different tracks of dialogue (security, economic policy, and human rights), and they will need to prepare their citizens for such an approach. The security and economic dialogues will undoubtedly move at a faster pace than human rights, but that does not signal an abandonment of Washington’s commitment in this area.

Appeals to nationalism and populism on this front must be carefully considered. As one analyst in Japan described it, pressure advocates have “worked on the people’s subconscious to keep them ‘angry about something.’ Targets of their anger are 100 percent wrong, and the public opinion attacking them are 100 percent right.” Another aspect of this “cognitive structure of nationalism [is that it] never forgets the pain received from others but always forgets the pain brought to others” (Sato 2005, 119). Tanaka Hitoshi has cautioned, “What I am really concerned about is that Japan is becoming overwhelmed by aimless nationalism or outrageous feelings. America is a bastard, China is a bastard, or North Korea is a bastard. Resentment such as this is making our society unsound. I think the framework of the East Asia Community is one of the movements that can help absorb such nationalism and direct it in more constructive ways” (Nitchou Kokkou Sokushin Kokumin Kyokai 2005, 26). U.S. policy makers and diplomats must strike

a careful balance to clearly demonstrate America's commitment to the values the two countries share, while at the same time avoiding contributing to unproductive divisions in the region that could undermine America's long-term national economic and security interests.

Of course, in the absence of any six-party progress whatsoever, incremental pressure can and should be applied, mostly through various forms of economic sanctions (keeping in mind that the value of sanctions is more often realized when they are removed, instead of when they are applied). But even small adjustments in this area, either in terms of offering compensation for progress on the abduction issue or applying certain sanctions, should be carefully considered in bilateral discussions. American and Japanese policies need not be identical, as in fact a slight difference in approach can provide room for compromise (as apparently happened during the last round of talks in 2005 when Japan facilitated a North Korean-U.S. conversation about the Macau bank sanctions). Several interviews conducted for this project suggested that Japan and the United States lose a certain amount of leverage when their policies are the same. But if there is to be some perceived chaos in the two countries' policies, it should be contrived chaos, not real, and they should be prepared to move nimbly when the situation changes.

U.S. lead negotiator Chris Hill's refusal to meet with his North Korean counterpart in Tokyo in April 2006 was a disappointment in this respect. Such a meeting would have offered a comfortably informal way to explore options to restart the six-party talks, and it would have indirectly underscored Japan's value as a potentially influential friend of the United States. If the frustrating history of the six-party talks has taught us anything it is that a solution to the DPRK nuclear and related problems will be complicated. Opportunities to clarify positions and make incremental progress (especially private, informal opportunities) should be seized. Such criticism is not meant to absolve North Korea of its responsibility for the lack of progress in bilateral and multilateral negotiations. American and Japanese wariness of Pyongyang's declared desire to resolve these issues is understandable and justified. But Washington opens itself up to similar criticism when it proclaims its willingness to meet unconditionally with North Korea at a six-party forum, and then refuses to talk with North Korea's lead negotiator at a venue that, while not officially "six party" in form was nonetheless endorsed by all the other participants.

The results of this study and the interviews were generally encouraging in terms of the effectiveness of the overall bilateral working relationship on these issues. The presi-

dent-prime minister relationship is healthy and productive, and officials from the vice president's office and the U.S. National Security Council have regular, if not frequent, contact with top Japanese lawmakers and bureaucrats. State Department-MOFA interaction is sustained and frequent, occurring through a number of channels involving State's bureaus of East Asian affairs, international security and nonproliferation, and policy planning with MOFA's bureaus of Asian affairs, North American affairs, and foreign policy. Both embassies also play a vital role for day-to-day contact. In addition, the two countries have carried on a ministerial strategic dialogue (about two meetings each year) between Under Secretary for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Nishida Tsuneo.

When it comes to the specific issue of North Korea, however, there is a sense that the two countries are simply treading water strategically, as evidenced by confusion among MOFA officials regarding Washington's true intentions and ultimate direction on the issue. In the summer of 2003, the two countries apparently held an in-depth and "across the board" discussion on North Korea policy, following the Crawford summit, that many at MOFA believed was unique and extremely useful (interview 2005j). With a leadership change pending in Japan, and with two full years left for the Bush presidency, now is probably the right time to prepare for another meeting of that kind. In advance of such a gathering, however, the U.S. government needs to reach out more aggressively beyond the State Department-MOFA channel of communication and step up consultations with a wider range of high-ranking LDP lawmakers, given their central role in policy making toward North Korea. These should include both sides of the Asia-policy debate raging within the LDP, as well as the leaders of the LDP and cabinet task forces noted earlier in this report. Such an initiative can be discussed when Prime Minister Koizumi visits Washington in June.

This is not to suggest that a special bilateral set of talks replace the trilateral consultations (U.S.-Japan-ROK) of the past. The United States and Japan should not give up on South Korea as a potential ally in this effort, as many of the ROK's positions are driven by domestic politics, and there is a chance that a new ROK leadership in 2008 could adopt an ever so slightly more U.S.-Japan-friendly approach. Trilateral coordination still has a role to play, and there might also be ways to coordinate this initiative with Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's strategic dialogue with his counterpart in Beijing. When it comes to the pressure component of the "dialogue and pressure" approach, however, U.S.-Japan policy coordination will be crucial. Stepped-up



efforts to further operationalize PSI, enhance defensive measures, or crack down on North Korean illicit activities will test the allies' ability to develop a cohesive strategy and to coordinate among a diverse set of departments and ministries. More effective interagency coordination at an operational level will be necessary.

The two countries are reaching a point where the issue of North Korea could become significantly more complicated and involve higher stakes, and this will strain the traditional methods of foreign policy coordination. The issue, moreover, is taking on broader implications for the geopolitical alignment in Northeast Asia, and the potential impact of near-term decisions needs to be weighed carefully. Regardless of whether talks with North Korea advance or retreat, inter-agency cooperation within the United States and Japan and between the allies will grow in importance, either to help craft or implement an agreement, or to coordinate strident defensive measures involving specialists in finance, trade and customs, non-proliferation, diplomacy, surveillance and intelligence, defense, and law enforcement, among other sectors. The current diplomatic infrastructure, however, might not be sufficient to manage such a complex and politically-charged bilateral issue.

At the very least, the State Department's Bureau of East Asia Affairs needs to get back up to full strength (e.g., former Special Envoy for the Six-Party Talks Joe DeTrani has not been replaced as of May 2006, and two new directors for the Japan and Korea desks are due this summer), and consideration should be given in Washington for a higher level of regular inter-agency coordination of North Korea policy with presidential backing (either at the National Security Council or a special State Department coordinator similar to the role played by Bill Perry and Wendy Sherman in the 1990s), given the issue's rising stakes.<sup>28</sup>

Overall, political and diplomatic fences are being erected in the region in ways that could run counter to America's long-term interests, bad neighbors notwithstanding. Some fence building may be inevitable, even practical and useful in some cases, but these fences must not be built so high as to discourage their dismantlement at the appropriate time. As former Japanese prime minister Hirota Koki reflected upon the path to the Pacific War last century, before he was executed for his own role in that tragedy, "all the small decisions have meaning" (interview 2005a).

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<sup>28</sup> See Schoff 2005a, 33.



# Appendix A:

## Text of the 2002 Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration

Provisional translation provided by MOFA, available at [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html) (accessed May 3, 2006).

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chairman Kim Jong-Il of the DPRK National Defense Commission met and had talks in Pyongyang on September 17, 2002.

Both leaders confirmed the shared recognition that establishing a fruitful political, economic and cultural relationship between Japan and the DPRK through the settlement of unfortunate past between them and the outstanding issues of concern would be consistent with the fundamental interests of both sides, and would greatly contribute to the peace and stability of the region.

1. Both sides determined that, pursuant to the spirit and basic principles laid out in this Declaration, they would make every possible effort for an early normalization of the relations, and decided that they would resume the Japan DPRK normalization talks in October 2002.

Both sides expressed their strong determination that they would sincerely tackle outstanding problems between Japan and the DPRK based upon their mutual trust in the course of achieving the normalization.

2. The Japanese side regards, in a spirit of humility, the facts of history that Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of Korea through its colonial rule in the past, and expressed deep remorse and heartfelt apology.

Both sides shared the recognition that, providing economic co-operation after the normalization by the Japanese side to the DPRK side, including grant aids, long-term loans with low interest rates and such assistances as humanitarian assistance through international organizations, over a period of time deemed appropriate by both sides, and providing other loans and credits by such financial institutions as the Japan Bank for International Co-operation with a view to supporting private economic activities, would be consistent with the spirit of this Declaration, and decided that they would sincerely discuss the specific scales and contents of the economic co-operation in the normalization talks.

Both sides, pursuant to the basic principle that when the bilateral relationship is normalized both Japan and the DPRK would mutually waive all their property and claims

and those of their nationals that had arisen from causes which occurred before August 15, 1945, decided that they would discuss this issue of property and claims concretely in the normalization talks.

Both sides decided that they would sincerely discuss the issue of the status of Korean residents in Japan and the issue of cultural property.

3. Both sides confirmed that they would comply with international law and would not commit conducts threatening the security of the other side. With respect to the outstanding issues of concern related to the lives and security of Japanese nationals, the DPRK side confirmed that it would take appropriate measures so that these regrettable incidents, that took place under the abnormal bilateral relationship, would never happen in the future.

4. Both sides confirmed that they would co-operate with each other in order to maintain and strengthen the peace and stability of North East Asia.

Both sides confirmed the importance of establishing co-operative relationships based upon mutual trust among countries concerned in this region, and shared the recognition that it is important to have a framework in place in order for these regional countries to promote confidence-building, as the relationships among these countries are normalized. Both sides confirmed that, for an overall resolution of the nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula, they would comply with all related international agreements. Both sides also confirmed the necessity of resolving security problems including nuclear and missile issues by promoting dialogues among countries concerned.

The DPRK side expressed its intention that, pursuant to the spirit of this Declaration, it would further maintain the moratorium on missile launching in and after 2003.

Both sides decided that they would discuss issues relating to security.

Prime Minister of Japan  
Junichiro Koizumi  
Chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission  
Kim Jong-Il  
September 17, 2002  
Pyongyang

# Appendix B:

## Outline of Japan's Basic Policies to Deal with the Abduction Issue

As articulated by the Cabinet's Abduction Issue Task Force over multiple meetings. Translation by IFPA.

### First Meeting, September 26, 2002

Under the Ministerial Council on Japan-DPRK Normalization and the Task Force of the Council, concerned agencies and organizations shall cooperate with each other and make every effort to resolve the overriding issue of the abductions.

1. In order to clarify facts quickly, concerned agencies and organizations shall cooperate with each other to take necessary measures against North Korea such as demanding information.
2. Regarding support to the victims and their families, based on their wishes, concerned agencies and organizations shall cooperate with each other at the initiative of the special advisor to the cabinet.
3. Other demands to North Korea except for what was stipulated in above 1 and 2 will be discussed based on factual findings in the future.

*(Note 1)* The facts to be clarified are, for example, the circumstances of the abductions; living condition of the victims; how the alleged dead actually died; status of the punishment of those responsible. These include the facts that the Japanese government has not recognized so far.

*(Note 2)* Support to the victims and families are, for example and for now, family members' North Korea visit; prompt return of the victims.

### Seventeenth Meeting, December 28, 2004

This meeting confirms the following six points as further government responses to the situation:

1. Strongly demand that North Korea swiftly investigate the fate of suspected abductees and return the survivors, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.
2. Continue efforts to demand swift and satisfactory responses from North Korea or demand firmer responses depending on initial responses.
3. Suspend humanitarian assistance to North Korea.
4. Continue strict law enforcement under the current legal structure, such as ship inspection.
5. Demand detailed explanations regarding identification and punishment of those responsible for the ab-

ductions. Also continue to demand handover from North Korea of the three suspects under international warrants on the abduction and of the Yodo-go hijack suspects.

6. Continue efforts to collect further information concerning the abduction issue

### Eighteenth Meeting, December 6, 2005

This meeting reconfirms the six policies on further responses which were confirmed at the previous meeting, and added the following two items:

1. Continue to investigate the "missing people" issue and establish necessary conditions for the investigation.
2. Enhance international cooperation for the settlement of the North Korean abduction issue, through the United Nations and other multilateral arenas and also closer cooperation with related countries.

# Appendix C:

## Bill on Response to Abduction and Other Human Rights Abuses Issues by North Korean Authorities

As submitted to Japan's House of Representatives on April 28, 2006. Translation by IFPA.

(Purpose)

### Article 1

This act, considering the United Nations General Assembly resolution on December 26, 2005, regarding the human rights situation in North Korea, in recognition that dealing with the abduction issues, Japan's urgent national issue, and other human rights abuses by North Korean authorities are the issues that need to be addressed by the whole international community, is aimed at deepening national understanding of the human rights abuses by North Korean authorities and at investigating and preventing the North Korean human rights abuses in cooperation with the international community.

(Responsibilities of the [Japanese] Central Government)

### Article 2

1. The government shall make ultimate efforts to resolve the national crime of abduction of the Japanese by North Korean authorities (hereafter "the abduction issue").
2. The government shall ask for information from the North Korean authorities and thoroughly investigate the whereabouts of the Japanese abductees and suspected abductees, and shall make efforts for their return.
3. The government shall make efforts to arouse public opinion on and investigate the abduction issue and other issues of North Korean human rights abuse.

(Responsibility of the Local Governments)

### Article 3

Local governments, in cooperation with the central government, shall make efforts to arouse public opinion on the abduction issue and other North Korean human rights abuses.

(North Korean Human Rights Abuses Issues Enlightenment Week)

### Article 4

1. North Korean Human Rights Abuses Issues Enlightenment Week shall be established in order to deepen the public's interest in and understanding of the abduction issue and other North Korean human rights abuses.
2. North Korean Human Rights Abuses Issues Enlightenment Week shall be between December 10 and 16.
3. The central and local governments shall make efforts to initiate programs that match the purpose of North Korean Human Rights Abuses Issues Enlightenment Week.

(Annual Reports)

### Article 5

The central government must submit to the Diet and make public its annual reports on government's efforts to settle the abduction issue and respond to other North Korean human rights abuses.

(Enhancement of International Cooperation)

### Article 6

The central government, in order to formulate appropriate policies regarding the Japanese abductees, suspected abductees, and other victims of North Korean human rights abuses, shall make efforts to enhance information exchanges with foreign governments and international organizations, investigative cooperation, and other international cooperation, and shall ensure close cooperation with domestic and foreign civil groups that support these victims.

(Measures to Take in Case There is No Improvement in the Human Rights Abuses Situation by North Korea)

### Article 7

The central government, when recognizing that there were no improvements in the abduction issue and other North Korean human rights abuse situations against the Japanese, in comprehensive consideration of international responses to North Korean human rights abuses, shall take measures in accordance with para.1, Art.3 of the Special Measures Act on Banning Entry by Particular Types of Vessels (Act no.125, 2004) and para.1, Art. 10 of the Act on Foreign Exchange and Trade (Act no. 228, 1949), and shall take other measures necessary for preventing North Korean human rights abuses against the Japanese.

### Supplementary Provision

This Act shall be in force on the day of publication.

(Reason)

In consideration of the current human rights situation in North Korea, there is the need for deepening national understanding on the abduction and other issues of human rights abuse by North Korea and for investigating and preventing North Korean human rights abuses in cooperation with the international community. This is the reason for submitting the bill.

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