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# *Japan and North Korea: The Long and Twisted Path towards Normalcy*

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## INTRODUCTION—A CENTURY’S ACCOUNTS TO BE SETTLED

Though East Asia as a whole is emerging from the shadow of Western imperialism, the year 2010 marks the one hundredth anniversary of Japan’s colonial annexation of Korea; yet the pain, misunderstanding, hatred and anger stemming from that act remain only partially assuaged between Japan and South Korea, and virtually unresolved between Japan and North Korea.

As of 2008, Japan has diplomatic relations with every country in the world save one—North Korea, its neighbour—while North Korea has diplomatic relations with 162 of the world’s 193 countries, but not with Japan, the United States, or a handful of other closely U.S.-allied countries such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. For this to be so sixty years since its founding is unusual to the point of absurdity. Regional fora during this past decade have seen much discussion of formulae for an East Asian, or Northeast Asian, community, and the logic of such a community to balance the existing European and North American blocs is strong, but until the legacy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is addressed, it is unlikely that any such entity can emerge and therefore likely that the promise of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will remain unfulfilled; the world economy will continue to totter on two and a half poles.

In the following paper, I will argue that the so-called “North Korea problem” may be better understood as a code-word for the accumulated residue of problems left over from an unhappy modern history—Korea’s unresolved nationalism, Japan’s imperialism and militarism and later its peculiar dependent relationship on the United States, the Cold War, and of the rise and incipient decline of the United States as regional and global hegemon. Of course it is true that North Korea is a “peculiar” state. It has been described as “outlaw” or even criminal, and its nuclear and missile programs and human rights record is, at best, vexing, but the peculiarity of the state can only be grasped when it is set within the frame of its modern history – of colonialism (in the extreme form of attempted national assimilation practiced by Japan), national division, civil and international war, and semi-permanent hostility between the North Korean state and the global superpower, the United States.

Japan is, in a sense, as much part of the “problem” as North Korea, and “normalization” requires almost as much of it as it does of North Korea. If there is a Gordian knot in East Asian politics, it is tied around the “North Korea problem.” For Japan, North Korea is the concentrated expression of multiple security, diplomatic and even identity dilemmas. For the past five years, Northeast Asia’s Six-Party Talks have been edging towards a new multi-polar and post-United States hegemonic order in Northeast Asia. Japan in particular, faces isolation unless it “makes a substantial course correction in its North Korean policy.”<sup>1</sup>

One scholar of the Japan-Korea relationship wrote just over two decades ago that “[a]lthough Japanese and Koreans can form lasting friendships and working relationships at the individual level, there is no sense of genuine friendship between the two peoples at a collective or societal level. Most Japanese are disdainful and contemptuous of Korea, do not understand and are insensitive toward the feelings of the Koreans, and simply do not wish to be involved with anything related to Korea...” whereas to Koreans, “The Japanese are indeed ‘economic animals ... the only interest Japan has in Korea is to aggrandize itself by exploiting whatever opportunity Korea provides.’”<sup>2</sup> Such an analysis, however hackneyed it may sound, is depressing precisely because it accords with the way so many Koreans and Japanese alike perceive things.

The ill-feeling between the (Korean) peninsula and the (Japanese) archipelago is rooted in Japanese colonialism. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century Japan built its Asian empire by crafting an identity for itself that was “non-Asian,” but an accompanying ideology of “Asianism” according to which Japan’s mission was to guide and lead Asia. Victories in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century wars against imperial China and Czarist Russia established Japan as a major imperialist power, and participant in the carve-up of Asia. From Korea, Japan appropriated land, wealth, history, even family names, language, and identity, imposing in its stead its own national identity, religion and emperor system. Some Koreans cooperated, whether because they believed they had no option or because they thought Japanese leadership necessary, many withdrew from the public realm and concentrated on private and business affairs, while a small number actively resisted, mostly from bases on Chinese territory to which they

were forced to retreat. In the final stages of the empire, hundreds of thousands of young Koreans were sent either to Japan itself or throughout the empire as soldiers, prison camp guards, laborers, and in the most tragic of all cases, as sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army. These contradictions could only finally be resolved when the empire collapsed in 1945.

After 1945, the empire was dissolved but Japan remained blocked from reconciliation with its neighbour region, which was first divided and set within a Cold War frame that erupted into the cataclysmic hot war of the 1950s and continued in “cold” (or rather just “sub-hot”) form through subsequent decades. Swathed in the embrace of its powerful cross-Pacific ally, Japan tended to continue looking at “Asia” as separate, distant, and secondary. Only after decades of studiously avoiding anything to do with either of its Korean neighbours did Japan “normalize” relations with one of them—the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea)—in 1965, under pressure from Washington and for Cold War reasons. But it offered no apologies for the crimes and horrors of the colonial era or any compensation to its victims, and so distrust and resentment dissipated only slowly. It took another 30 years before Japanese Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi in August 1995, expressed Japan’s regret and apology for the pain and harm done by the four decades of colonialism.

Three years later, the governments of Japan and South Korea signed a Joint Declaration affirming the contents of the Murayama Statement. By the time of the Soccer World Cup of 2002 (sponsored jointly and played equally in both countries), it was possible to see in the bilateral relationship the warmth, spontaneity and mutual respect that Chong-Sik Lee had been unable to see a few decades earlier. The pattern has been spotty, however, and despite more than four decades of normalization and both millions of people and billions of dollars of goods crossing each year between the two countries, the wounds inflicted by Japanese imperialism are easily inflamed, as shown in the dispute over Japan’s claim to a few tiny rocks of disputed territory between the two countries—Tokdo (in Korean) or Takeshima (in Japanese). In March 2005, and incensed South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun, roundly criticized Japan, describing the Murayama Statement and the Joint Declaration of 1998 as inadequate.

For the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), however, four decades of colonial rule was followed by more than six decades of hostility and confrontation that continues to this day. Although Japan’s direct colonial responsibility ended with defeat and the liquidation of its empire in 1945, for the North Korean state that was born in 1948, Japanese hostility dates to the Korean War. The Japanese people have little sense of having participated in this war (since it was under US occupation at the time), but to North Korea Japan was nevertheless a belligerent: a major military, logistical and technical base, with National Railway, Coast Guard, and Red Cross all actively involved, Japanese sailors leading the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division to their Inchon landing, and minesweepers of the Japanese coast guard clearing the way for U.S. forces to land at Wonsan and U.S. B-29 bombers from Yokota (near Tokyo) and Kadena (in Okinawa) flying ceaseless bombing raids on North Korean towns, ports, dams, and other facilities. North Korea was laid waste in the full biblical sense of that term; after the struggle against Japanese imperialism, this life and death struggle formed the North Korean identity.

For five and a half decades peace on the Korean peninsula has rested on the thin and fragile basis of the 1953 ceasefire, while major U.S. forces have maintained bases in South Korea (and Japan). Through the 1950s and 1960s, following the end of the Korean War, Japan made no response to overtures from North Korea for normalization other than to encourage as many Japan-resident Koreans as possible to repatriate themselves to North Korea.<sup>3</sup> While the U.S. and its allies conducted threatening exercises that rehearsed scenarios for return to full-scale war, North Korea engaged in irregular activities to gather intelligence on U.S. and Japanese bases, sending spy vessels and agents with false passports, and at times abducting Japanese people in order, presumably, to secure identities and passports for spies sent overseas (or to South Korea). In the 1990s, North Korea’s neighbours grew suspicious and fearful because of its development and deployment of medium-range missiles and the suspicions of its development of a nuclear weapon program. For its part, North Korea became a garrison state, declared itself a “Songun” (military first) polity, and grew so to live with fear and suspicion that it became a veritable paranoid state.

In August 1998, something called a “Taepodong,” launched from North Korea, soared over Japanese skies and then dropped

into the Pacific Ocean. North Korea said it was a failed satellite but most in Japan saw it as a missile that plainly had Japan within range, and Japanese security thinking became transformed around the “North Korea threat.” Yet economic failures gradually enfeebled it. Japan’s GDP came to be two hundred times greater, and its annual military expenditure is roughly twice that of North Korea’s Gross Domestic Product. Japan’s army (Ground Self Defence Force) is bigger than either the British or French, its navy the 5th largest in the world (after the United States, Russia, China and the United Kingdom), and its air force the twelfth largest, larger than Israel’s, while behind it stands the military colossus of the United States. As Japan beefed up its alliance with the US and its own military preparedness, North Korea had no reliable ally and its “threat” diminished. Its million-strong army was reduced to foraging and farming for subsistence, its exercises were rarely reported, its equipment was mostly 1950s vintage and its shortage of fuel was so severe that pilots could only practice flying their planes for a few hours per year. In March 2003, Japan launched two reconnaissance satellites to spy on North Korea. Any North Korean attempt to reciprocate would almost certainly have been treated as an act of war.

Dependence on the United States and hostility toward North Korea have been fundamental to Japan’s national policy for over half a century. Six decades after the collapse of emperor-centred nationalism, Japan has constructed an elaborate, but fragile model of dependent (or *yokekoku*) nationalism, that especially under the comprehensive “Reorganization of U.S. Forces in Japan” (2005-6) matched deeper subjection to the United States’ regional and global purpose with stress on its own uniqueness and superiority.<sup>4</sup> The North Korean “threat” played, as I have argued elsewhere, a key role in justifying Japan’s paradoxical national policy of clientilism.<sup>5</sup>

The problems of North Korea’s overall military posture, its nuclear weapons program, and its abduction of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s, themselves vexing and complex, are embedded in the twisted historical matrix of four 20<sup>th</sup> century decades of Japanese imperialism and six of Korean division and confrontation under conditions created by war that was in part total and devastating, and in part quasi and debilitating, but never resolved. History remains bitterly contested, for the reason that North Korea’s foundation myths are myths of anti-Japanese resistance in the 1920s and 1930s and the founder and first leader was the anti-Japanese partisan, Kim Il Sung. Japanese imperialism and US hegemony are two underlying issues to be addressed if normalcy is to be created on this peninsula.

While Japan has long enjoyed the protection of the U.S. umbrella, North Korea has faced the threat of U.S. nuclear weapons aimed explicitly at it ever since the Korean War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea lost the protection of the Soviet nuclear umbrella as well. Sometimes portrayed as an aggressive, threatening state, the more appropriate images for North Korea may rather be those of a porcupine or snail: stiffening its quills or retreating into its shell in fear to attempt to resist contact with a hostile outside world.<sup>6</sup>

## **TENTATIVE STEPS, 1990s**

In the early 1970s, there was a brief flurry of diplomatic activity following the opening of relations with China in 1972, but the North-South confrontation was still too fraught for Japan to consider unilateral action and almost two more decades passed before the end of the Cold War and the opening of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and South Korea opened a new window of opportunity. In September 1990, negotiations about normalization began, at last, between Japan and North Korea.<sup>7</sup> The Japanese government expressed regret over past colonial rule, and a mission went to Pyongyang consisting of Kanemaru Shin of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Tanabe Makoto of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) bearing a personal letter from Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki. A three-party (LDP, JSP, and Workers Party of Korea) declaration on normalization was adopted. The Japanese side expressed an apology and a desire to compensate for the misery and misfortune caused by 36 years of Japanese colonialism and (more controversially) for the losses incurred in the 45 years since, and the two agreed to open talks on normalization.

Those negotiations went to eight rounds between January 1991 and November 1992 and were, on the whole, characterized

by frank and cooperative exchanges. North Korea agreed, reluctantly, to lower its demand for “reparations” and substitute “economic cooperation,” but Japan’s suspicions over North Korean nuclear plans and over the abduction of Japanese citizens decades earlier (which it began to pursue, and North Korea to deny) proved impossible to overcome. The surrounding international atmosphere also darkened, and Japan was unwilling or unprepared to overrule the opposition of the U.S. (and South Korea). Perhaps the greatest blow was the arrest on corruption charges of Kanemaru himself in November 1992.

In 1995, the coalition cabinet of Murayama (Tomiichi) made an effort to reopen negotiations. It provided some rice aid to the flood and famine-struck North Korea. However, it was not an opportune time for rapprochement. North Korea’s missile tests and spy ship encroachments into Japanese waters stirred Japanese anger and the nuclear crisis continued, even if the immediate 1993-4 fears of war had somewhat receded. Japanese public opinion was outraged that North Korea refused to express gratitude for the rice.<sup>8</sup>

From 1998, the Kim Dae-jung government in Seoul inaugurated a “Sunshine” policy toward the North that culminated in the South-North Summit of June 2000. From Washington, too, the Clinton administration slowly turned towards engagement, appointing William Perry as special adviser on North Korea and sending him to Pyongyang for visits in 1998 that opened the way for the exchange of top-level visits in September and October 2000 between Choi Myong-rok, Deputy Chairman of North Korea’s National Defense Commission and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Following the visit of delegation headed by former Prime Minister Murayama to Pyongyang in December 1999, Japan also resumed normalization talks in April 2000 after a seven-year hiatus; and from October 2001 pursued secret negotiations towards a possible summit.

In January 2001, however, the George W. Bush administration was inaugurated. Time ran out on the U.S. exchanges as they were on the brink of a Presidential visit to Pyongyang. George W. Bush moved to adopt a hard-line policy that was later given expression in the “Axis of Evil” speech.

## **KOIZUMI’S GREAT STEP FORWARD, 2002**

On September 17, 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi surprised the international community by visiting Pyongyang.<sup>9</sup> Since George W. Bush had denounced North Korea as part of the “Axis of Evil,” the visit was an independent diplomatic initiative that could have been seen in Washington as a signal of dissent. The Koizumi mission followed long, secret negotiations that were initiated by North Korea at the end of 2001. “Mr. X,” a North Korean who enjoyed the confidence of Kim Jong Il, approached Tanaka Hitoshi, head of the Japanese Foreign Ministry’s Asia-Pacific Bureau. Tanaka reported to Prime Minister Koizumi, and only a tiny group of senior officials was briefed. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo, who favoured a hard line on the abduction issue, did not find out about the negotiations until August, just weeks before joining Koizumi for the actual visit.

The September meeting between the Japanese and North Korean leaders was tense, dramatic and short—a single afternoon. The two leaders agreed to “make every possible effort for an early normalization of relations.” Koizumi expressed “deep remorse and heartfelt apology” for “the tremendous damage and suffering” inflicted on the people of Korea during the colonial era, while Kim Jong Il apologized for the abductions of thirteen Japanese and for the dispatch of spy ships in Japanese waters. The apologies may have been perfunctory, but the important thing is that they were made.

The Declaration (see next page) was straightforward in its commitment for both sides to move towards normalization based on mutual trust, while abiding by international law; but it was also equivocal in major respects: not only in Japan’s refusal to countenance “reparations” for its colonial rule, let alone the subsequent period, or compensation for individual victims, but also in North Korea’s vague reference to “regrettable” and “unfortunate” events, without spelling out exactly what they were, who had been responsible, and how they would be redressed. In sum, it whittled down the conciliatory overtures of the Kanemaru mission and reiterated the gist of the formula agreed between Japan and South Korea, first in 1965 and again in



1995 and 1998: apology, but not reparations.

#### Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration<sup>10</sup>

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

North Korea had to swallow its pride, abandoning its long-held insistence that the Japanese colonial regime was an illegitimate imposition. However much it would have preferred to have been given “reparations,” the prospect of Japanese

“economic cooperation,” together with that of ending diplomatic isolation and resolving long and bitter historical grievances, was irresistible. Both sides stood to benefit. For Pyongyang, the need for economic reconstruction outweighed reservations over abandonment of the claim for compensation for colonialism and war. Various estimates, the highest about 1.5 trillion yen (roughly \$12 billion) circulated. As the sum of \$500 million had stimulated South Korea’s economic development after 1965, so North Korea might have hoped to do likewise. On the Japanese side, according to calculations by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, normalization would lead to substantial “aid and development” programs, opening lucrative business opportunities for core factions of the Party and their associates in the recession-hit construction industry in the future building of roads, bridges, dams, power stations, railways, and other elements of North Korean infrastructure.

Kim apologized for the abduction between 1977 and 1982 of a group of Japanese civilians, and for the incursions of a North Korean spy ship (“mystery ship”) that had been sunk in a brief exchange of fire in Japanese waters in December 2001. “Some elements of a special agency of state” had been “carried away by fanaticism and desire for glory,” he explained: “I had not imagined that it would go to such lengths and do such things . . . The Special Forces are a relic of the past and I want to take steps to wind them up.” Attributing the abductions and spying to the abnormal situation between the two countries, Kim promised that they would never be repeated.<sup>11</sup>

The abduction issue had been slowly gathering attention in Japan since the 1980s, but the admissions nevertheless came as a huge shock. The abduction matter became, and remains, the single major stumbling block to reconciliation. The purpose of the abductions was not made clear, but it had presumably been either to teach Japanese-language courses to intelligence agents or so that North Korean agents could appropriate their identities for overseas operations. Most shocking to Japan, however, was the North Korean announcement that of the thirteen, eight had died in various mishaps and only five were still alive. Most of the victims had been snatched—literally grabbed and stuffed into bags and onto waiting boats—including three couples, while three were students, inveigled into venturing to Pyongyang from Europe, where they had been travelling at the time.

The most famous case became that of Yokota Megumi, a then 13-year old schoolgirl who disappeared after a badminton game in the Japanese port city of Niigata in November 1977. Her parents immediately took up her case, giving rise to the movement for the rescue of abducted Japanese.

Initially Koizumi’s diplomacy and the moves to normalize relations with North Korea drew a positive public response in Japan. North Korea’s admission and apology for its criminal actions was an act without precedent in its history, and Kim Jong Il’s conciliatory response, which conceded so much to his old enemy Japan, suggested that he was determined to achieve a breakthrough in relations. Yet the overture, which might have been taken as the expression of a desire to turn over a new leaf, soon became engulfed in waves of anger and calls for further punishment, while Japan’s own apology was ignored by the Japanese media and public. The “harm” caused by Japan over thirty-five years of colonial rule seemed as nothing compared to the harm done to Japan through the abductions.

Weeks after the Summit, on 15 October 2002, the five surviving abductees (a woman seized as a 19-year old nurse on the island of Sado and two couples who had been grabbed while on summer seaside dates and married later, all of them taken away in the summer of 1978) returned to Japan in a special plane. Although the agreement between the two governments had been that the five would return for ten days to two weeks before going back to Pyongyang to work out their long-term future and that of their families, the Japanese government soon announced that they would not return.<sup>12</sup> Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo took the view that “In Japan there is food and oil, and since North Korea cannot survive without them, it will crack before too long.”<sup>13</sup> It meant repudiation of a part of what had just been agreed by Koizumi and Kim Jong-il. Events were to prove Abe mistaken, however, since North Korea did not crack, and the fragile basis of trust on which Koizumi and Kim had pledged to launch the relationship was shattered.

When follow-up talks on normalization were held in Kuala Lumpur at the end of October 2002, and Japanese delegates



demanded the unconditional handover of the children of the five returned abductees and announced that no other discussions or negotiations could take place until the date for such return was fixed, while North Korea demanded the Pyongyang understanding be honored and the Five sent back to Pyongyang, the impasse was insurmountable. Several of the “children” were in fact already adult and all were at that point going about their lives in Pyongyang with no idea that their parents were Japanese, let alone abducted Japanese. North Korea explained its motivation—plausibly if surprisingly under the circumstances—in terms of sympathy for the plight of the abductees.

There is a reason why we did not send back [the abductees] permanently—if they were things we could have just sent them back, but they are people. They have lived in North Korea for over twenty years, married, had children, grown accustomed to our culture and customs, and they have come to conform to the standards and way of life of our society. Their children do not know their parents are Japanese and they have the same hatred for Japan for having caused pain and harm to the people of Korea as the other children of our country. Their parents have been working for our republic and enjoying a treatment above that of ordinary people. They have affection for people and all sorts of human connections.

What would be their response if they were just suddenly told: ‘You are all Japanese and therefore get out.’ Whatever our intent, that would be tantamount to saying: ‘You are no longer needed and therefore, go.’ It would be a psychological blow to them and they would likely feel betrayed. In particular, the children do not know Japanese and are completely ignorant of the customs, habits, and order of Japanese society. Because of our consideration for such matters, things are not just able to be settled at a stroke by bundling them off now like things.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the Pyongyang motive behind such an utterance, it expressed a humanity and sympathy for the human plight that was buried in nationalist sentiment in much of the Japanese response. A concerted Japanese campaign developed, which focused especially on one case, Yokota Megumi.

According to Pyongyang, Megumi had indeed been abducted, and subsequently married to a Korean man in 1986. She gave birth to a daughter, Hye-gyong or Eun-gyong, in 1987, but suffered from depression and committed suicide in 1993 (which was later revised to 1994). Megumi’s husband was known first as a North Korean man named Kim Chol-ju, but he was later identified as a South Korean named Kim Young-nam, possibly also an abductee - although the man himself denied that.

A barrage of Japanese efforts was launched to persuade Megumi’s daughter, brought up by her North Korean father after the death of her mother when she was five years old, to leave home and “visit” her grandparents in Japan. Interviewed by Japanese television, the girl, Kim Hye-gyong, tearfully asked why her grandparents, having first promised to visit her, now insisted that she go to see them instead. Megumi’s father, Yokota Shigeru, had initially expressed a strong desire to meet his grandchild, but officials of the Rescue Association persuaded him against the idea and both parents were gradually incorporated as central figures in the campaign to denounce and force the overthrow of Kim Jong Il. When Hye-gyong announced that her life was devoted to serving her country and her “Dear Leader,” that was simply taken as evidence of brain-washing. Her grandparents made one further effort to have Hye-gyong visit Japan, with promises of a visit to Tokyo’s Disneyland, but after noting what had happened in the case of the five “returnees,” any such promises were inevitably construed as an attempt to inveigle her away, permanently. However, by law, and certainly by North Korean law, the rights of the child herself and pending her maturity, those of her father, had priority.

The bilateral negotiations were also complicated by the nuclear crisis that erupted in the wake of Koizumi’s Pyongyang visit when U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly alleged, after his Pyongyang visit in October, that Pyongyang had confessed to him a secret uranium enrichment weapons program. Pyongyang denied it, but the United States made much of it, suspending the supply of heavy oil under the Agreed Framework. In January 2003, North Korea responded by withdrawing from the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and resuming its nuclear plans.

In August 2003 the regional countries began a series of meetings at Beijing that became known as the “Six-Party Talks (the United States, Japan, Russia, China, South Korea, and North Korea).<sup>15</sup> All parties shared the objective of resolving the

North Korean nuclear question. A majority (China, Russia, and South Korea) conceived of such resolution as something to be accomplished in the frame of negotiations for comprehensive diplomatic, political, and economic normalization. Washington's agenda was more ambiguous. For the first two years of the Beijing process it actually refused to talk to the North Koreans at all, much less to contemplate the security guarantees Pyongyang sought or a civil nuclear program and light water reactor, believing instead, that North Korea's submission should be the prelude to, rather than fruit of, such negotiations. Japan's agenda was different again. The dominant faction in the Japanese bureaucracy seems to have assumed that there could be no reconciliation between the U.S. and North Korea and thus confidently constructed the unique stance in which the abductions would carry greater weight for it than the nuclear or missile concerns. For most purposes, it stood four-square with the U.S., but its agenda was also distinctive in that domestic considerations—in particular the abduction of Japanese citizens two and a half decades earlier—weighed heavily on it. Despite enormous diplomatic effort, and despite the legitimacy of the Japanese grievance, it singly failed to mobilize international opinion in the way that it did domestic.

Anger in Japan rose at Pyongyang's explanations of the fate of the eight abductees who were said to have died. One couple was said to have died between 1979 and 1981, both of heart failure, although the husband was only 24 years old and his wife 27. Further, the husband allegedly suffered a heart attack when swimming, although Japan insisted he could not swim and on the day in question it turned out, a typhoon had battered the Korean coast. A second couple was said to have died within a week of each other in 1986, one of cirrhosis of the liver and the other of a traffic accident, and a third couple was said to have died along with their child as the result of a defective coke heater. The bodies of all of these people had disappeared without a trace in the mid-1990s, washed away in floods, dam bursts, and landslides. Pyongyang reported that the remains of a seventh casualty, allegedly killed in a traffic accident in 1996, had first been washed away in the floods, but then recovered and re-interred in a common grave. Subjected to DNA testing in Japan, the remains turned out to be those of a middle-aged woman. North Korea's explanations strained credulity.

The Japanese public greeted the drama of the abductees' slow "recovery" of their Japanese-ness and the eventual casting off of their Kim Jong Il badges with tears of national relief. The suspicion spread that there might be more Japanese abductees than at first suspected—perhaps as many as 40 or even 100. The Japanese apology was quickly forgotten, and the analogy between Japan's "abduction" during the colonial era of thousands of Koreans to work in mines, factories, and low-ranking jobs in the Japanese military such as guarding Western prisoners, or as prostitutes ("comfort women") for Japanese soldiers, was angrily dismissed. Viewed in this larger historical context, by Koreans north and south, the transformation of the obviously criminal abductions of thirteen Japanese citizens into the crime of the century and the Japanese into the ultimate victims of Asian brutality had a painful air of unreality.

The abduction issue owed its centrality in Japanese politics to a national movement composed of three main strands. The National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Abducted by North Korea (Sukukukai, or the "Rescue Association," founded 1998), the National Association of Families of Japanese Abducted by North Korea (Kazokukai, or "Families Association," founded 1997), and the Association of Dietmembers for Rescue of the Japanese Abducted by North Korea ("Rachi Giin Renmei," founded 2002)<sup>16</sup> all believed in applying maximum pressure on North Korea and, if necessary, using force to rescue the abducted. From its inception, the priorities of the Rescue Association were unambiguous. Nishioka Tsutomu, permanent Vice-Chairman, described North Korea as "evil."<sup>17</sup> Sato Katsumi, head of a small think-tank specializing in Korean problems and founder and chairman of the Association, wrote that the abduction matter could not be solved so long as the Kim Jong Il regime lasted and that Japan should focus on steps designed to provoke the collapse of the Kim Jong Il regime. Only by such a "regime change," he argued, could the abduction problem be resolved.<sup>18</sup> "Japan should not negotiate with it, but by all means work to overthrow that government," he told the security committee of the House of Representatives in December 2002.<sup>19</sup> The Association became a political pressure group par excellence, with branches up and down the country, a steady flow of "sympathy" funds, strong media backing and close ties to government. President George W. Bush welcomed members of the Association to the White House in April 2006. To the extent that its implacable hostility to the Pyongyang regime was translated into policy, it made resolution of the abduction problem less, rather than more likely.

While these three organizations reinforced an implacably hostile approach, a fourth, the “National Association for the Normalization of Japan-North Korea Relations,” (founded July 2000, headed by Murayama Tomiichi) took the view that Japan had a responsibility to apologize and atone for its colonial rule and that the various problems in the relationship were the product of a deeply rooted abnormality that could only be resolved through normalization.<sup>20</sup> Through the turbulent years that followed, this group remained a focus of moderate opinion contrasting with the more strident and public “Rescue” and “Families” associations.

As the drama of these families unfolded before the nation, major television channels, newspapers, and journal publishers catered to, and in turn cultivated, a mass market of fear and hostility. Books on North Korea flooded from the presses, the overwhelming majority of them virulently hostile,<sup>21</sup> and television channels offered saturation coverage on North Korea, often three or four programs during a single day, each exposing one or another nightmare aspect of the North Korean state or society, from defectors and starvation to corruption, missiles, and nuclear threats. The two volumes of memoirs of the former senior North Korean official, Hwang Jang-yop, who defected in 1996, were published in Japanese as “Declaration of War on Kim Jong Il,” and “Have No Fear of a Mad Dog.”<sup>22</sup> A manga (comic book) published in mid-2003, depicting Kim Jong Il as a violent, bloodthirsty, and depraved despot, sold half a million copies in its first three months, probably more than all books ever published in English about Korea put together. Japanese readers seemed to relish stories of unmitigated “evil,” especially when spiced with prurient detail. Nothing sold better than details of Kim Jong Il’s complicated family life, his wives, mistresses, and the “yorokobigumi” or “happiness brigade” of young women alleged to be his harem.

As the mood of anti-North Korean hatred and contempt spread through Japanese society, in September 2003, Koizumi himself fell silent, allowing his subordinate, Abe Shinzo, to take the initiative. National policy on North Korea was being substantially directed by the abduction organizations. When an unknown assailant set a time bomb at the residence of Tanaka Hitoshi, the foreign ministry official who had been involved in negotiating the Koizumi visit, Tokyo’s popular and powerful governor, Ishihara Shintaro, promptly declared that “[Tanaka] got what was coming to him.” When challenged, Ishihara said he had not meant to support terror, but added that he “deserved to die ten thousand deaths.”<sup>23</sup>

## **KOIZUMI’S SECOND TRY, 2004**

On 22 May 2004, Prime Minister Koizumi returned to Pyongyang to meet a second time with Kim Jong Il. As he departed for Pyongyang, Koizumi explained his purpose: “[i]t is in the national interest of both countries to normalize the current abnormal Japan-North Korea relationship, to turn a hostile relationship into a friendly relationship, confrontation to cooperation.” In Pyongyang, Koizumi reaffirmed his desire to establish diplomatic relations and promised that, so long as the Pyongyang Declaration was adhered to, Tokyo would not implement sanctions. He also pledged 250,000 tons in food aid and \$10 million worth of medical supplies, and promised to address the question of discrimination against Korean residents in Japan. In response, the North Korean side agreed to consider the five returned abductees permanently rather than temporarily returned, to permit their children to leave the country with Koizumi, to allow the American army defector, Charles Jenkins, and the two children of Jenkins and Soga Hitomi to meet with Soga in a third country, and to reopen “sincere reinvestigation” into the eight abductees whose whereabouts were uncertain. Both sides agreed to return to the basic principles of the Pyongyang Declaration and renew constructive negotiations.

Later, when asked his impression of the North Korean leader, Koizumi told the Diet, “I guess for many his image is that of a dictator, fearful and weird, but when you actually meet and talk with him he is mild-mannered and cheerful, quick to make jokes ... quick-witted.”<sup>24</sup> In this, Koizumi confirmed the view of Kim Dae-jung and Madeleine Albright, among others, that Kim Jong Il was a man to do business with. In fact, so keen was Kim to talk with U.S. President George W. Bush that he suggested that Koizumi provide the music so that they could sing together—even to the point that their throats became sore.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, Koizumi pledged to normalize the Japan-North Korea relationship within his remaining two years of office, if possible within a single year, but events would prove that to be impossible.

The Families Association roundly castigated Koizumi, describing the mission as having brought about the “worst possible outcome” because he had not personally brought back Soga’s family or secured adequate explanation of the many anomalies in North Korea’s original report. Opinion leaders echoed this criticism by describing the visit as a “diplomatic failure,” yet opinion surveys in all major newspapers found a more positive public. Typically, a 23 May poll in the *Asahi Shimbun* found that 67 percent of respondents evaluated Koizumi’s mission positively. On the question of the opening of diplomatic relations, 47 percent were in favor, considerably more than the 38 percent opposed.

The success of Koizumi’s second mission hinged, however, on the reinvestigation into the fate of the eight abductees that North Korea said had died and the others, (including Soga Hitomi’s mother) it insisted had never entered the country. The North’s most important witness was Kim Chol-jun, the former husband of Yokota Megumi. In 2002, the North Korean side had described Kim as “an employee of a trading company,” but in 2004, he turned out to have been working for the very “special agency” that Kim Jong Il held responsible for the abductions in the first place. Although he spent two and a half hours talking with Japanese officials, Kim Chol-Jun declined to be photographed or videotaped, or to provide any DNA sample to prove that he was actually Hye-gyong’s father. He did, however, hand over what he said were the remains of his wife that he had dug up three years after the burial, cremated, and kept.<sup>26</sup> At that time, he was already remarried and, as the Japanese government later wrote, the behaviour he described was so implausible as to be “exceedingly unnatural.”<sup>27</sup>

On December 8, Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Hosoda Hosoyuki announced the result of the officially commissioned analysis of the remains provided by Megumi’s supposed North Korean husband. The National Research Institute of Police Science had been unable to produce a result but the medical department of Teikyo University, which had a high reputation in the field of mitochondrial DNA analysis, had been more successful. Isolating DNA from the remains, it detected the DNA of two unrelated people but no trace of Megumi’s. The government concluded that the remains were not Megumi’s and announced that it was “extremely regrettable that the other side’s investigation has not been sincere.” It sent a stern protest to Pyongyang.

Late in December, the Japanese government published its detailed report on the results of its investigation of the materials brought back from Pyongyang, listing multiple discrepancies and concluding that there was “absolutely no evidence” to support North Korea’s claim that the eight had died. The government believed in the “possibility of their being still alive,” and demanded their immediate return.<sup>28</sup> The leap of logic—from the failure of North Korea’s reinvestigation to establish convincingly the death of the abductee victims to the assumption that they must be alive and the demand that they be returned—passed unnoticed in the Japanese fury at North Korea’s apparent deceit.

The Japanese government therefore froze the dispatch of any further “humanitarian” aid—after half the grain and medical supplies promised by Koizumi in May had been sent—and inched closer toward the imposition of sanctions. It was hard to see how the gap between Japan’s insistence on return and North Korea’s insistence that the disputed abductees were all dead, could be bridged.

North Korea’s formal response came on January 24 in the form of a Central News Agency “Memorandum.” On the problematic bones, it stressed that the Police Institute and Teikyo University analyses had come to different conclusions and argued that it was unscientific and improper to place absolute weight on one conclusion only. It pointed out that since human remains in North Korea are cremated at 1200 degrees centigrade it was “common sense” that DNA analysis could not produce any result. And it protested that the name of the analyst was not attached to the Japanese expert opinion. The North Korean conclusion—that the outcome of the analysis was “a fabrication by corrupt elements”—was plainly hyperbole, but the doubts it raised over the outcome of the Japanese analysis could not be lightly dismissed. The Memorandum also denounced Japan for breaking its promise, made in a statement signed by the head of the Japanese delegation at the time when the bones were handed over, “to hand these remains directly to Yokota Megumi’s parents, and not to publish the matter.” It concluded by saying that “[n]ot only has Japan gone to the lengths of fabricating the results of an analysis of human bones and refused to concede that the abduction problem has been settled, but it also completely denies our sincerity

and effort. It is they who have pushed North Korea-Japan relations to this worst-ever pitch of confrontation.”<sup>29</sup>

It did not help North Korea's case that its account of Megumi's life had been full of inconsistencies and improbable details—including the change in the date of her death (from 1993 to 1994), confusion over which hospital had treated her, and the implausible story of her escaping the attention of the accompanying doctor while strolling in the hospital grounds and hanging herself from a pine tree with a rope made out of her own clothing.<sup>30</sup> There were also major discrepancies in the accounts of the fate of other abductees, who were said to have died in strange traffic accidents (in a country with little traffic), or of heart attacks or liver failures (when young and apparently healthy) or from poisoning by a defective gas heater. The supporting documentation was singularly unpersuasive. Even allowing for the fact that the 1990s had been a decade of acute economic and social crisis in North Korea, in which hundreds of thousands had died of famine or in severely strained economic circumstances and much of the country had been devastated by floods and landslides, the evidence provided still seemed implausible. Apart from the Megumi case, when North Korea provided remains that it said were "probably" those of a man abducted from Europe in 1980 (Matsuki Kaoru), DNA tests showed, apparently conclusively, that they were unrelated.<sup>31</sup>

The Japanese government's pronouncements on the Megumi case, based on mitochondrial DNA analysis, were generally taken as definitive and Japan's technology was assumed to have exposed North Korea's deception. However, Pyongyang gained support from an unexpected quarter. In a 3 February, 2005 article, the prestigious international scientific journal *Nature* revealed that the DNA analyst, Yoshii Tomio, was a junior faculty member (lecturer) in Teikyo University's medical department, without previous experience in the analysis of cremated specimens, who described his own tests as inconclusive, comparing the samples to “stiff sponges that can absorb anything” and admitting that they could be very easily contaminated by anyone coming in contact with them.<sup>32</sup> In short, the Japanese analysis was anything but definitive.

Furthermore, Yoshii's laboratory had used up the five tiny samples, making independent verification impossible, even though, in a 1999 textbook on DNA analysis, he had written that because the DNA extraction procedure was so delicate, subject to error, and likely to meet challenge in the courts, the principle of independent confirmation was crucial.<sup>33</sup> In other words, in meeting his commission from the Japanese government, Yoshii had not followed the practice he himself prescribed.

When the Japanese government's chief cabinet secretary, Hosoda Hiroyuki, called the article inadequate and a misrepresentation of the government-commissioned analysis, *Nature* responded with a highly unusual editorial:

Japan is right to doubt North Korea's every statement. But its interpretation of the DNA tests has crossed the boundary of science's freedom from political interference. *Nature's* interview with the scientist who carried out the tests raised the possibility that the remains were merely contaminated, making the DNA tests inconclusive... The problem is not in the science, but in the fact that the government is meddling in scientific matters at all. Science runs on the premise that experiments, and all the uncertainty involved in them, should be open for scrutiny. Arguments made by other Japanese scientists that the tests should have been carried out by a larger team are convincing... Japan's policy seems a desperate effort to make up for what has been a diplomatic failure ... Part of the burden for Japan's political and diplomatic failure is being shifted to a scientist for doing his job—deriving conclusions from experiments and presenting reasonable doubts about them. But the friction between North Korea and Japan will not be decided by a DNA test. Likewise, the interpretation of DNA test results cannot be decided by the government of either country. Dealing with North Korea is no fun, but it doesn't justify breaking the rules of separation between science and politics.<sup>34</sup>

With *Nature* accusing the Japanese government of “meddling in scientific matters ... in a desperate effort to make up for what has become a diplomatic failure,”<sup>35</sup> science was, unexpectedly, on the North Korean side. Other specialists in the highly specialized field of DNA tended to take the same critical view, yet their criticisms and doubts scarcely penetrated into the Japanese mass media. The *Asahi* on 10 May quoted the senior anthropologist and DNA specialist at the National Science Museum, Shinoda Ken-ichi, saying “to ensure scientific objectivity, the data should be published and further tests to confirm the results should be conducted by an independent institution.”<sup>36</sup> The *International Herald Tribune* on 2 June quoted three more



Japanese experts, who agreed that it was “not possible” for the Japanese government to claim that the remains North Korea submitted were not Megumi’s. As one of them (Honda Katsuya, professor of forensic medicine at Tsukuba University) put it, “all we can conclude from the tests is that two people’s DNA were detected in the given material and that they did not agree with Megumi-san’s. That’s it. There is another huge step before we can conclude that they are not Megumi-san’s bones.”<sup>37</sup>

One week after the *Nature* editorial, Yoshii Tomio was promoted to the prestigious position of head of the forensic medical department of the Tokyo metropolitan police department and, as such, was no longer available for media comment.<sup>38</sup> When the suggestion arose in the Diet that this smacked of government complicity in “hiding a witness,” the Minister of Foreign Affairs responded that it was “extremely regrettable” for such aspersions to be cast on Japan’s scientific integrity.<sup>39</sup>

Though Yoshii was silenced, his colleague Ishiyama Ikuo wrote in the medical journal *Microscopia* that the conclusion reached by the authorities (as to North Korea’s bad faith) must have been based on “other information” than Yoshii’s report, since that analysis could only establish that her DNA was not present in the sample.<sup>40</sup> Yet there was no reason to think any other evidence existed.

The Japanese government presumably felt confident of its claim to the moral and scientific high ground in a dispute with North Korea, yet the bureaucratically controlled, peer-unsupervised, analysis, by a single researcher without experience in work on cremated remains, whose findings could not be confirmed and who was promptly removed from public accountability when doubts were raised about his work, complicated the issue and gave comfort, rather than undermining the regime in North Korea.

The abductee families (including the Yokota’s) paid no attention to the unsatisfactory nature of Japan’s DNA test process and North Korea’s complaints. They also ruled out other possible actions, such as going to North Korea themselves in the case of the Yokota’s visit to their granddaughter, and put direct pressure on North Korean authorities to conduct a more sincere investigation.<sup>41</sup>

In Pyongyang on 31 March, 2005, Mr. Song Il-ho, Deputy Director of the Asian Department of North Korean Foreign Ministry, a key person in Japan-DPRK negotiations, criticized the Japanese lack of sincerity, noting that Japan tried to distinguish colonial rule and abduction, both phenomena of the twentieth century divided by only twenty-five or so years, as if one were a past and the other a present issue. He expressed his government’s grave concern that North Korea had carried out what he described as an “exhaustive” investigation into the abductions, producing 16 witnesses for the Japanese to interview in Pyongyang in November 2004, and even handed over the remains of Megumi, only to be rebuffed and insulted in return. As if taking a leaf from Yoshii’s textbook on DNA procedure, he suggested that the remains could be submitted to a third country institution for independent verification. He concluded, “We can live without Japan. Koizumi has done what needed to be done, but he has been blocked by opposition forces.”<sup>42</sup>

The bold and apparently courageous enterprise that Koizumi had launched to turn “a hostile relationship into a friendly relationship,” had instead turned one already hostile into something even more hostile.

## VACILLATION, 2005-7

Koizumi’s mission was complicated by the degeneration in relations between the U.S. and North Korea and by vacillation in Washington. Many within the Bush administration could be satisfied by any simple agreement with North Korea on nuclear weapons. They wanted much more—comprehensive demilitarization, especially the scrapping of North Korea’s missile program, major political changes (in respect of “human rights”), and ultimately regime change. As the U.S. government issued contradictory signals, on the one hand recognizing North Korea as a “sovereign state” and insisting it had no plans to attack it, but on the other hand calling Kim Jong Il a “tyrant” and a “dangerous person” and his country as an “outpost of tyranny,”<sup>43</sup> North Korea responded in a similarly contradictory vein. On the one hand, the North Korean Foreign Ministry declared (10 February 2005) that it possessed and would expand its nuclear arsenal, thus implicitly repudiating the 1992



North-South Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament, the 1994 U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework, and, in spirit at least, the Pyongyang Declaration of 2002, in which Japan and North Korea had committed themselves to resolve nuclear issues by complying with all relevant international agreements and by dialogue. On the other, It insisted that if only the United States would treat it in a friendly manner, recognizing and respecting it, it would be ready to return to the conference table and would not need to “have a single nuclear weapon.”<sup>44</sup>

At the Six-Party Talks in Beijing, however, the vacillating minority—the U.S. and Japan—found it difficult to persist in blocking the majority insistence on a negotiated outcome. By mid-2005, what had begun in Beijing as a U.S. attempt to mobilize a united front of pressure on North Korea slowly turned, under South Korean, Chinese, and Russian “reverse pressure,” into a forum for real multilateral negotiation. Fearful of becoming what Jack Pritchard, formerly the State Department’s top North Korea expert, described as “a minority of one . . . isolated from the mainstream of its four other allies and friends in the Six-Party Talks,” the U.S. steadily modified its position.<sup>45</sup> North Korea reciprocated. No such softening of position was possible for Japan, however. With bilateral negotiations stalled over the abductions, it held fast to its intransigent position. Its “marginalization” in the Beijing framework deepened.<sup>46</sup>

In September, the parties reached a general, albeit vague, agreement on principles and objectives: North Korea to scrap “all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs” and return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in return, the U.S. to grant it diplomatic recognition, normalization, and economic benefits, including, at “an appropriate time,” a light-water reactor. The Agreement declared principles that conformed to international law, recognized the interests of regional countries for a de-nuclearized peninsula, and responded to North Korea’s pleas for security guarantees and diplomatic and economic normalization, but hardliners in both Washington and Pyongyang took umbrage. North Korea made its commitment to end its weapons program and return to Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards dependent on getting a light water reactor *first*, as a “physical guarantee for confidence building,”<sup>47</sup> while the U.S. insisted that a light water reactor could not even be *considered* until all other steps in bringing North Korea back into the NPT were complete. In other words, Pyongyang’s view of “appropriate time” for a North Korean light water reactor was “now,” Washington’s the distant future, or actually, never.

Even more to the point, the U.S. Government (presumably directed by Vice-President Dick Cheney) took steps to sideline and neutralize the Beijing process and vitiate the agreement by widening the North Korean issue from nuclear matters to the nature of the regime itself and applying the national security provisions of the Patriot Act designed for the struggle against terrorism.<sup>48</sup> The newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, Alexander Vershbow, denounced North Korea as a “criminal regime” responsible for “weapons exports to rogue states, narcotics trafficking as a state activity and counterfeiting of our money on a large scale,”<sup>49</sup> while the coordinator of the administration’s North Korea working group described it as “the only government in the world today that can be identified as being actively involved in directing crime as a central part of its national economic strategy and foreign policy. . . . In essence, North Korea has become a “soprano state”—a government guided by a Worker’s Party leadership whose actions, attitudes, and affiliations increasingly resemble those of an organized crime family more than a normal nation.”<sup>50</sup>

Between 2005 and 2007, the U.S. therefore required North Korea not just to renounce its nuclear ambitions but to “open up its political system and afford freedom to its people.”<sup>51</sup> It was plainly a non-negotiable demand, and its point was underlined by the conduct of large-scale military exercises.<sup>52</sup> Shifting the focus in this way, from Beijing, where the U.S. had found it increasingly difficult to call the shots,<sup>53</sup> to the global arena, was to undercut the efforts of the regional powers—South Korea, China and Russia—to achieve a negotiated solution. As Charles Pritchard noted, North Korea policy came to be “fully captured by those in the administration who seek regime change.”<sup>54</sup>

Since Japan was pursuing its own, abduction-centred, pressure diplomacy, it could welcome Washington’s turn away from the freshly negotiated agreement and join it instead in measures to squeeze North Korea, cut its trade and restrict the flow of funds to it, hoping for “regime change.” While the U.S. and Japan reverted to “pressure,” however, the regional powers

either did or planned deals, maximizing the two-way flow of funds and trade: i.e. precisely the reverse.

North Korea was left with few options. With its pleas for lifting of the financial sanctions and/or for direct talks with the U.S. ignored, its discussions with Japan on the abductions at a dead end, trade being slowly stifled and military intimidation stepped up, it responded in July with the launch of seven Scud, Nodong and Taepodong missiles into seas adjacent to the Russian Far East, followed three months later with its first nuclear test. It was as if there had been no agreement at all.

These missile and nuclear tests may have been unwise and provocative, but neither breached any law. For at least a half century, North Korea had not committed aggressive war, overthrown any democratically elected government, or threatened any neighbour with nuclear weapons. It had even apologized for its past crimes. Yet in Japan, it was as if (as one South Korean commentator noted) a North Korean missile had actually hit central Tokyo.<sup>55</sup> Senior Japanese government figures talked of pre-emptive strike against the missile sites, 92 percent of public opinion favoured sanctions,<sup>56</sup> and a substantial majority supported prompt deployment of an anti-missile system, irrespective of cost or effectiveness. Security Council Resolution 1695, tabled and aggressively promoted by Japan, denounced the missile tests as tending to “jeopardize peace, stability and security in the region and beyond,”<sup>57</sup> and Resolution 1718, in October, imposed financial and weapons-related sanctions.<sup>58</sup>

When a new government took over in September 2006, it was headed by none other than Abe Shinzo, the personification of hard-line and uncompromising North Korea policy, who had actually risen to power by undermining the negotiation policy of his then superior, Koizumi. In office, Abe maintained that there was no room for discussion with North Korea until the abductees were returned and, since North Korea insisted that it had already done precisely that, the prospects were bleak.

Government under Abe became identified with the media-led mass movement of hostility to North Korea. Independently of the Security Council, in the wake of the missile and nuclear tests the Abe government adopted a set of sanctions (building on and reinforcing the so-called “economic sanctions” of 2004 which subjected North Korean vessels and exchange transactions to tight controls) that amounted to suspension of virtually all trade and communication between the two countries.<sup>59</sup> Port calls by North Korean-registered ships and all North Korean imports were banned, remittances frozen, and the export of luxury goods to North Korea prohibited. Some may well have believed that North Korea’s leader, deprived of caviar, cognac, and golf buggies, would be brought to his knees. He appointed Nakayama Kyoko Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on abduction matters, to set up an inter-ministerial “Headquarters on Abduction Problem Measures,” and instituted an annual “North Korean Human Rights Abuses Awareness Week.” Local governments throughout the country were mobilized, government sponsored public meetings were held with slogans to the effect that “Megumi lives, and we must get her back;” full page advertisements in national newspapers declared that the abduction problem was “the greatest problem” Japan faced; the national broadcaster, NHK, was ordered to “pay attention” to the abduction issue;<sup>60</sup> and around the world, Japan’s diplomatic missions conducted special screenings of a documentary film about Megumi.<sup>61</sup> The government-sponsored campaign stirred Japanese public opinion and focused it on sanctions, but it achieved more by way of heightening sentiment in Japan than of resolution of the abduction problem. It adopted the assumption from leaders of the “Rescue” Association that there could be no resolution short of the overthrow of the Pyongyang regime.

The sanctions were subsequently renewed four times on a half-yearly basis, most recently in October 2008, but Pyongyang was able, at least in some measure, to compensate by expanding its trade with other neighbours, notably China and South Korea. Predictions of a North Korean capitulation to such pressure proved as mistaken in 2006 as they had in the winter of 2002-3 when Abe had predicted the fall of the Pyongyang government.

But if the government’s policies were singularly unproductive, if not counter-productive, so far as North Korea was concerned, the roused and mobilized and frustrated Japanese national sentiment turned to harassment of Japan’s own resident Korean community, especially the North Korean-affiliated *Chongryun* (General Association of Korean Residents) Koreans.<sup>62</sup> Currently there are around 610,000 Korean residents (or *Zainichi*) in Japan, of whom about 25 percent are members of Chongryun and 65 percent of the South Korean affiliated Mindan.<sup>63</sup> These Chongryun-affiliated *Zainichi*

Koreans have long struggled to maintain their own cultural identity, with their own schools and businesses, and have been accustomed to periodic discrimination, abuse and intimidation. Even before the sanctions, one in five children attending North Korean-affiliated schools in Japan reported various forms of abuse, from verbal to physical attack, their clothes sometimes slashed with cutters while on the subway or on the street.<sup>64</sup> Under the sanctions, that harassment reached new levels. Local governments and courts moved to strip North Korean-related organizations of preferential tax treatment, seizing property (including the national headquarters of Chongryun in Tokyo) in default and in some cases auctioning it.<sup>65</sup> Petty harassment, abuse, and occasional violence, including arson attacks on Chongryun property, were reported. Local government authorities also bowed to “public sentiment” in refusing the use of public premises for musical or theatrical performances by North Korean-related groups.<sup>66</sup>

One particular case exemplified this phenomenon of rising discrimination against those of North Korean affiliation. In May 2006, a 75 year-old Japan-resident Korean woman declared 60 intravenous drip packs and four packs of liver ailment medication (given to her by a Japanese doctor friend) as part of her luggage when boarding the Mangyongbong Ferry (which until then, had plied regularly between the Japanese port of Niigata to the North Korean port of Wonsan) for a visit to her doctor son in North Korea. When told she could not take them with her, she took them back home. Six months later, however, sanctions were in place and the cabinet’s “measures for addressing the abduction problem,” (16 October 2006) included a crackdown that one author described as the “systematic implementation of oppression and harassment of Japan-resident Koreans and their organizations.”<sup>67</sup> The National Police Agency’s public security bureau suddenly took up the “intravenous pack” case, setting up a 100-strong team of investigators and searching not only the homes of the woman herself and her doctor friend, but also the Tokyo headquarters of Chongryun. The national media featured shocking stories suggesting that the woman, and Chongryun, might have been supporting North Korea’s nuclear, chemical, or biological warfare programs. Though eventually, in July 2007, the matter was quietly resolved with a verdict of suspended indictment, the public image of Japan-resident Koreans was blackened and suspicion that they might be, in some way, connected with abductions and terror spread.

## **BREAKTHROUGH? 2007-8**

Twice rebuked and sanctioned by the United Nations, as of late 2006, North Korea was arguably the world’s most friendless and reviled country. Within six months, however, it almost magically climbed from apparent nadir to a zenith and accomplished its key diplomatic objective. Under a 13 February 2007 Six-Party agreement, North Korea was to shut down and seal its Yongbyon reactor as first step towards permanent “disablement” and provide a full inventory of all its nuclear and related facilities. In return, the other parties were to grant North Korea immediate energy aid, with more to come when it presented its detailed inventory of nuclear weapons and facilities to be dismantled. The U.S. and Japan were to open talks aimed at normalizing relations, and the U.S. would “begin the process” of removing the designation of North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and “advance the process” of terminating its application under the Trading with the Enemy Act. The scope and significance of the deal was immense. The impact on Japan was described by some commentators as a “Bush shock,” akin to the “Nixon shock” over China three and a half decades earlier. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that it was the missile and nuclear tests, especially the latter, that impressed Washington with the need to take it seriously.

Japan was a reluctant party to the 2007 settlement, and a diplomatic gap slowly widened between it and the United States thereafter. Though the 2007 agreement was confined to nuclear matters, Japan continued to believe that the abduction issue could not be addressed separately and that it could rely on the United States to stand firm with it to see both resolved. Abe perhaps made too much of the visit of the abducted families, including the parents of Megumi, to the White House in April 2006 and of President Bush’s evident sympathy for their plight. Though Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice explained to him at the White House in May 2007 that the Bush administration had no legal obligation to link the abduction to terror issues,<sup>68</sup> he seemed not to grasp the significance of the President’s careful avoidance of any policy commitment.<sup>69</sup> Failing to adjust Japan’s strategy, Abe simply depended on Washington’s favour.<sup>70</sup> As the U.S. began to retreat, and to make a serious

attempt to reach agreement with North Korea, Japan's North Korea containment policy "fell apart."<sup>71</sup>

James Kelly, former United States Assistant Secretary of State, said in Beijing in late April 2007, that Japanese politicians faced a "hard choice" over priorities.<sup>72</sup> Former Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, suggested that North Korea "might remain in possession of a certain amount of nuclear weapons even as the [Korean] peninsula comes slowly together for some sort of unification," and that the United States might have to "sit down" with Japan to explain it.<sup>73</sup> If so, nobody in Japan's government was ready for such a "sitting down." It was a harsh reminder to Japan that the U.S. did not see its national interests as necessarily incompatible with some continuing nuclear capacity in North Korea, and that Japan's abduction agenda was a bilateral, not multilateral, matter, which Japan and North Korea would have to work out between themselves.

The Abe government's formula of putting forth the abductions as "the most important problem Japan faces," more important than nuclear weapons or missiles, was repeated, mantra-like, even as international understanding or support for it (even from the Bush administration) drained away.<sup>74</sup> While the five other Beijing countries sought to resolve the nuclear problem and address the legacies of history, Japan pursued its own agenda. Under Abe Shinzo in 2006-7, the politics of "Japan as beautiful,"<sup>75</sup> with a "proud" history and minimal (or zero) war responsibility, and a priority at the Six-Party talks to abductions over nuclear matters, isolated the country diplomatically at a crucial moment in the negotiation of a new order for Northeast Asia.<sup>76</sup>

It did not help that Abe was trying to persuade Washington to adopt his North Korean agenda at the same time as his government was applying every conceivable pressure to try to block a congressional resolution calling on Japan to apologize and accept responsibility its own gross breaches of the human rights of the wartime "Comfort Women." On that matter too, Abe failed dismally.<sup>77</sup>

Abe's Japan suffered multiple defeats and humiliations and seemed unable or unwilling to grasp the shift in U.S. thinking.<sup>78</sup> Previously unimaginable rumbles of criticism of the Bush administration began to be heard.<sup>79</sup> The Ministers of Defense and of Foreign Affairs referred to Iraq as a "mistaken" war, without justification, pursued in a 'childish' manner, and to the United States being too 'high-handed' in Okinawa. Protesting that it would not be party to any aid to North Korea until the abduction issue was settled, and refusing to shoulder any financial responsibility, Japan was reduced to pleading with the Bush administration not to take steps required under the Beijing agreement, such as lifting the terror-supporting label from North Korea. The head of the Liberal Democratic Party's Policy Council, Ishihara Nobuteru, denounced the United States North Korea policy as "appalling" (*hidoi*) and declared it would be no bad thing for Japan to abandon the Six-Party Talks.<sup>80</sup>

In September 2007, after less than a year in government, Abe suddenly threw in the towel, resigned, and was replaced as Prime Minister by Fukuda Yasuo. Fukuda took over from where Abe had left off in the futile mission of trying to extract assurances from Washington.<sup>81</sup> Though Christopher Hill promised Pyongyang that it would be delisted from the status of terror-supporting state in return for its fulfilling its obligations under Phase Two of the Six-Party agreements, Japan devoted intense diplomatic efforts, "warning," requesting, pleading with the U.S. government not to honour that promise.<sup>82</sup> Eventually an exasperated Christopher Hill told Japan's chief negotiator in the Six-Party Talks, Saiki Akitaka, that if Japan felt so strongly about it, it could enact its own law to declare North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>83</sup> Once the final decision was made, a telephone call from Condoleezza Rice to Japanese Foreign Minister Nakasone Hirofumi is said to have lapsed into a shouting match described as "pretty nasty, with Rice basically demanding 'Get out of our way and let us do this.'"<sup>84</sup>

Irrespective of Japan's objections, delinking became the US watchword. Japan found itself bowing to US pressure and having to agree, reluctantly, to return to the negotiating table with North Korea over the abductions. Although Japan's own priority to abductions over nuclear weapons formed no part of the Beijing agreements, it was expected to play a major role in bankrolling the energy and other aid for North Korea that comprehensive settlement demanded.

Japanese leaders were conscious and fearful that, if the Beijing agreement of February 2007 was successfully implemented,

the North Korean nuclear issue resolved, and relations with North Korea normalized, China stood to gain significantly greater weight in American thinking. If relations on all sides with North Korea were to be normalized (a process that would include peace treaties between United States and North Korea, Japan and North Korea), Japan would be shaken to its foundations, forced to rethink its overall post-Cold War diplomatic posture. Perhaps the worst Japanese fear was that a large-scale shift in Asia policy might be underway in the U.S., with China gradually coming to replace Japan as a strategic partner.

The urgency felt by the other Beijing parties to de-nuclearize the peninsula and comprehensively normalize Northeast Asia, contrasted with the Japanese insistence on the priority of past grievance over present threat, and the Japanese implicit insistence that Japanese victimhood bore priority over universal human rights. Outrage at being the victim of North Korean abduction of some dozen or so of its citizens nearly three decades ago would be more easily shared if framed within a ready acceptance of responsibility for Japan's own mass abductions and violations of Korean human rights a few decades earlier. By prioritizing the abductions and sanctions, Japan isolated itself at the Six-Party Talks, but diminished its capacity on both strategic and moral grounds.

Progress following the February agreement was intermittent, but in due course North Korea took steps to disable its reactor, even entertaining the world media to a controlled demolition of its cooling tower (in June 2008), handing over its inventory of nuclear facilities and 18,000 pages of supporting documentation of its nuclear activities, thus opening the path to the U.S. formally deleting it from the state sponsors of terrorism list on 11 October. The shock for Japan was so much the greater because it had taken an opposite step, renewing its sanctions, just one day before the delisting.

Prime Minister Aso, though given only 30 minute advance notice of the announcement, responded politely, but his Finance Minister, Nakagawa Shoichi, described it as "extremely regrettable"<sup>85</sup> and the head of the Abducted Families Association called it a "betrayal."<sup>86</sup> Sato Katsumi, the key figure in the national abduction movement, said the U.S. government had yielded to "a gangster's threats."<sup>87</sup> One prominent intellectual said he "wept with chagrin over the U.S. being such an unfaithful ally," lamenting that Japan had sent its troops to Iraq in the belief that only the U.S. could be relied on; now, he implied, Japan would have to rethink its security.<sup>88</sup> Another raged that what the U.S. was doing amounted to "appeasement" and threatened that the outcome might include Japan becoming a "wild card."<sup>89</sup> Outrage filled the autumn Tokyo air. 11 October was for Japan a black day, signalling a diplomatic failure and crisis with few, if any, parallels in its U.S. relationship.

Japan appeared to have two diplomatic options, neither attractive: to go it alone, maintaining its pressure and trying to force Pyongyang to capitulate, with potentially catastrophic consequences including withdrawal or expulsion from the Beijing Conference and (at best) heightened tension in its relationship with the U.S., or to yield, losing face and provoking unforeseeable domestic reaction for what many would see as "appeasement." In high dudgeon, Japan refused to carry out its obligation under the Six-Party agreement to supply North Korea with 200,000 tons of heavy oil to which it became entitled after the completion of its obligations under Phase Two of the agreement.<sup>90</sup> It was the logical consequence of its policies attaching higher priority to abductions than to nuclear weapons, but it was not a priority that Japan could expect to win much support for beyond its own shores. A face-saving compromise seemed likely, Japan sticking to its refusal to "reward" Pyongyang by making any direct payment towards energy supplies, but instead paying an amount roughly equal to the cost of the oil to be delivered to Pyongyang (about 16 billion yen), but to refer to it as a contribution to dismantling nuclear facilities.<sup>91</sup>

## CONCLUSION—UNRAVELING THE KNOTS

In the early 21st century Japan, public anger over crimes committed against it triumphed over reason, injured virtue over diplomacy. Japan was slow to pay attention to North Korea, let alone to address its colonial responsibility. For too long, Japan simply followed the United States, forgetting its responsibility as a former colonial power and paying no heed to its neighbor even as resentments there mounted. Politicians and media figures seemed unable to grasp the core of aggrieved justice that lay at the heart of Pyongyang's message.



North Korea may be a deeply distorted state, the fossilized encapsulation of the contradictions and failures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but its plea for normalization and relief from nuclear intimidation was not unreasonable. U.S. and Japanese antagonism helped the regime justify and reinforce itself and fed the paranoia that led the country down the path of missile and nuclear development.

The “North Korean threat”-related frenzy, fed by powerful bureaucratic, media, and political groups, provided the pretext for a thorough transformation of Japan’s defence posture. Extraordinary effort was devoted to preparing the institutional framework for an “emergency,” that being the preferred euphemism for war with North Korea: from the “New Guidelines” agreement of 1997, the 1999 Regional Contingency Law, the “Terror” and Iraq Special Measures Laws of 2001-2003, the Emergency Laws of 2004, and to the comprehensive Reorganization of US Forces in Japan of 2005-6.<sup>92</sup>

All Japan’s four 21<sup>st</sup> century Prime Ministers (Koizumi, Abe, Fukuda, Aso) struggled to reconcile conflicting priorities: to serve and satisfy the U.S. on the one hand and to mobilize and placate domestic anti-North Korean sentiment on the other. Only Koizumi (2001-2005) tried, at least sporadically, to project a vision that transcended the contradictions. His initiatives of September 2002 and May 2004 offered tantalizing glimpses of such an East Asia—of reconciliation, normalization, and cooperation in the construction of a peaceful, cooperative, Northeast Asia. The Pyongyang Declaration he co-signed with Kim Jong Il in September 2002 incorporated the pledge of Northeast Asian regional cooperation, and his formal policy speech to the opening session of the Diet on 20 January 2005, likewise declared a commitment “to play a positive role in the construction of an open “East Asian Community, sharing an economic prosperity that embraces diversity.”

However, Koizumi allowed the policy initiative to pass to his then subordinate (later successor), Abe Shinzo, and through him to a nation-wide movement committed to overthrowing, rather than normalizing relations with, the regime in Pyongyang. So long as neo-conservatives were in the ascendancy in Washington, such a line was plausible, but Washington’s 180-degree switch of policy following the North Korean nuclear test (whether or not because of it) left Tokyo high and dry. Its two principles of service to Washington and hostility to North Korea began to diverge sharply.

During 2008, however, there were some signs pointing to the exhaustion of the sanctions paradigm and the search for an alternative. Looking back over a decade of close involvement as the head of the mass Japanese movement on the abductions, Hasuike Toru (Secretary-General of the Families Association, 1997-2005, and deputy head, 2005-7) criticized his own organization’s susceptibility to right-wing manipulation and its priority to “regime change” over the interests of the victims and their families. Hasuike reflected that (here paraphrasing from his various statements and interviews):<sup>93</sup>

1. By declining for so long to take any step towards normalization, the Japanese government bore some responsibility for the abductions: “it is possible the abductions occurred precisely because there were no diplomatic relations;”
2. From a North Korean point of view, Japan may well seem to have behaved in an outrageous (*keshikaran*) manner, and to have tricked them on no less than four occasions, by indicating that the way to normalization would be opened, first by admission and apology; second by the return of five abductees; third by the release of Jenkins and the abductee children; and fourth, by the provision of the “Megumi remains,” only each time following North Korean concessions with demands for more;
3. The Japanese movement, especially under the Abe government, stirred anger and hatred towards North Korea and fed an atmosphere of “narrow nationalism” across Japan that excited North Korea to respond in kind, asking what was a dozen or so abductions against the abductions of tens of thousands of Koreans in the colonial era. The movement had not been based on a universal sense of human rights and some leading figures associated with it lacked any qualification to speak about the abductions because they denied the existence of Comfort Women or (Japanese) forced labor. The abductee families had been “brain-washed” and manipulated for political purposes.
4. The slanging match between the two countries had been unproductive. Sanctions had accomplished nothing. There



had to be a better way.

Japan and North Korea did agree in June, albeit with obvious reluctance and under U.S. and Chinese pressure, to reopen direct negotiations towards solving the abduction issue. North Korea promised a new investigation, and Japan in return slightly eased the sanctions. The expectation could not be high that a new investigation would shed significant light on the secret workings of the country's "special agency of state" of 30 years ago, but North Korea had to strive to explain itself better. From a civic perspective, a group of twelve prominent intellectuals attempted to clarify and focus the national debate by formulating policy options,<sup>94</sup> and for the first time, an all-party Dietmembers' League was set up to promote normalization.<sup>95</sup> In October 2008, North Korea extended its invitation to the Japanese abductee families to visit Pyongyang to conduct their own inquiries into the missing and, in the case of the Yokota's, to visit their granddaughter.<sup>96</sup>

The launch of the Obama administration in Washington in January 2009 seemed certain to intensify pressure on Tokyo. Obama's Korea policy advisor, Frank Jannuzi, spoke of moving step-by-step on the basis of mutual respect, to normalize relations, lifting sanctions, providing security guarantees and energy and economic assistance, opening the way—with complete de-nuclearization—for North Korea to become a "friend of the U.S."<sup>97</sup>

Sooner or later, Japan-North Korea relations will be normalized. When that day comes it will herald a transformation of East Asia, opening the way to healing the scars of Japanese colonialism, Korean division, Korean War, and of the Cold War, and to a comprehensive normalization not only of inter-state but also intra-state and inter-people relations too. Diplomatic normalization holds the best prospect for comprehensive normalization, in which would be included the living conditions and basic rights of the people of North Korea. When these things happen, the entire region, not least, the 23 million people of North Korea can, at last, close the books on the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## THE ABDUCTED JAPANESE

As of 2008, seventeen nationals were officially recognized by the Japanese government as abduction victims. North Korea in 2002 admitted that thirteen had been in North Korea, of whom, only five survived. It denied all knowledge of two and claimed that five had gone of their own free will. Two more were added to the Japanese list in April 2005 and November 2006. Pyongyang claimed that two people responsible for the abductions, Chang Pong-rim and Kim Sung-chol, had been tried in 1998 and sentenced to death and fifteen years respectively. The table below is drawn from Japanese media sources and the home page of the Government of Japan's Headquarters for the Abduction Issue (English version at: <http://www.rachi.go.jp/en/mondaiten/index.html>). It must be read with the caveat that some of the data under "Status," not only with regard to the alleged deaths but also as to other details, including the marital status of some abductees, is derived from North Korean sources, is challenged by Japan, and North Korea admitted in November 2004 that some had been fabricated.

	Name	Gender	Born	Circumstances of Disappearance	Status
1	Kume, Yutaka	Male	ca. 1925	September 1977; from Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa Prefecture.	North Korea denies knowledge.
2	Matsumoto, Kyoko	Female	ca. 1948	21 October 1977; from vicinity of home in Yonago, Tottori Prefecture.	Denied. Added to list November 2006. A November 2008 report suggested that she was alive and well in Pyongyang (Japan Times, 10 November 2008).
3	Yokota, Megumi	Female	15 Oct. 1964	15 November 1977; from Niigata, Niigata Prefecture.	Admitted. m. Kim Chol-ju, a.k.a. Young-nam, in 1986; 1 daughter Kim Hye-gyong, b. 14 September 1987; said to have committed suicide while suffering depression, March 1993, later revised to April 1994.
4	Taguchi, Yaeko	Female	10 Aug. 1955	June 1978; from Tokyo.	Admitted. m. Hara Tadaaki (see separate entry) October 1984; d. 30 July 1986 in traffic accident; remains washed away in floods. Japanese government suspects that Taguchi was the woman also known as Lee Un-hae, who was the Japanese language tutor for the North Korean female agent convicted of the bombing of KAL 858 in 1987.
5	Tanaka, Minoru	Male	ca. 1950	June 1978; persuaded to go overseas and later taken to North Korea.	Denied. Added to list March 2005.
6	Chimura, Yasushi	Male	4 June 1955	7 July 1978; with Hamamoto Fukie near coast of Obama, Fukui.	Admitted, m. Hamamoto Fukie (see separate entry) in November 1979; 3 children; translator in Academy of Science; returned 2002.
7	Hamamoto, Fukie	Female	8 June 1955	7 July 1978; with Chimura Yasushi near coast of Obama, Fukui.	Admitted. m. Chimura Yasushi (see separate entry) in November 1979; 3 children; returned 2002.
8	Hasuike, Kaoru	Male	29 Sept. 1957	31 July 1978; with Okudo Yukiko from coast of Kashiwazaki, Niigata.	Admitted. m. Okudo Yukiko (see separate entry) in May 1980; 2 children; both employed in Pyongyang as translators; returned 2002.
9	Okudo, Yukiko	Female	15 April 1956	31 July 1978; with Hasuike Kaoru from coast of Kashiwazaki, Niigata.	Admitted. m. Hasuike Kaoru (see separate entry), May 1980; returned 2002.
10	Masumoto, Rumiko	Female	1 Nov. 1954	12 August 1978; with Ichikawa Shuichi from Fukiage Kagoshima Prefecture.	Admitted. m. Ichikawa Shuichi on 20 April 1979; d. 17 August 1981 of heart failure; remains lost in July 1995 floods.
11	Ichikawa, Shuichi	Male	20 Oct. 1954	12 August 1978; with Masumoto Rumiko from Fukiage Kagoshima Prefecture.	Admitted. m. Masumoto Rumiko (see separate entry) on 20 April 1979; drowned (heart failure) while swimming, Wonsan, 4 September 1979; Japanese government claims he could not swim; remains lost in July 1995 floods and dam burst.
12	Soga, Hitomi	Female	17 May 1959	August 1978; with her mother Soga Miyoshi from Sado Island, Niigata Prefecture.	Admitted. Returned September 2002. m. U.S. Army deserter Charles Robert Jenkins in 1980; 2 daughters; Jenkins and children returned to Japan in July 2004.

	Name	Gender	Born	Circumstances of Disappearance	Status
13	Soga, Miyoshi	Female	ca. 1932	August 1978; with her daughter Soga Hitomi from Sado Island, Niigata Prefecture.	Denied.
14	Ishioka, Toru	Male	29 June 1957	May 1980; from Madrid, Spain during a trip in Europe.	Admitted. m. Arimoto Keiko (see separate entry) in December 1985; d. 4 November 1988.
15	Matsuki, Kaoru	Male	23 June 1953	May 1980; from Madrid, Spain during a trip in Europe.	Admitted. d. 23 August 1996 in traffic accident; remains washed away in floods but subsequently recovered, cremated, and re-interred in common grave; possible remains returned to Japan proved negative in DNA tests.
16	Hara, Tadaaki	Male	10 Aug. 1936	June 1980; from Miyazaki, Miyazaki Prefecture.	Admitted. m. Taguchi Yaeko (see separate entry) in October 1984; d. 19 July 1986, of liver failure (cirrhosis); remains lost in flooding.
17	Arimoto, Keiko	Female	12 Jan. 1960	June 1983; from London, UK where she was studying English.	Admitted. m. Ishioka Toru (see separate entry), in 1985; 1 child; d. 4 November 1988 by gas poisoning from coal heater along with husband and child; remains lost in landslide August 1995.

<sup>1</sup> G. L. Curtis, "The US in East Asia: not architecture, but action," *Global Asia*, vol. 5, no. 2, Fall 2007, pp. 43-51, at p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Chong-Sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension*, Stanford University, The Hoover Institution, 1985, pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> See T. Morris-Suzuki, *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War*, Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> This matter is addressed in detail in Gavan McCormack, *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*, London and New York, Verso, 2007, and in the expanded Chinese, Japanese, and Korean editions published in 2008. See also "Sadae in the 21<sup>st</sup> century," *Kyunghyang sinmun*, Seoul, 5 October 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Japan sent its forces to Iraq because, as then Prime Minister Koizumi put it, if ever Japan were to come under attack it would have to depend on the U.S., not the UN. (*Client State*, p. 56)

<sup>6</sup> See my *Target North Korea: Pushing North Korea to the Brink of Nuclear Catastrophe*, New York, Nation Books, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Details in Takasaki Soji, *Kensho – Nicho kosho*, Heibonsha shinsho No. 213, 2004, pp. 28ff.

<sup>8</sup> Takasaki, pp. 99-104.

<sup>9</sup> The following resumes some material from my previous essays on the Japan-North Korea relationship: including Chapter 4 of *Target North Korea: Pushing North Korea to the brink of Nuclear Disaster*, New York, Nation Books, 2004; (with Wada Haruki), "The Strange Record of 15 Years of Japan-North Korea Negotiations," in John Feffer, ed, *The Future of U.S.-Korea Relations: The imbalance of power*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 81-100; and Chapter 4 of *Client State*, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Wada Haruki, "Can North Korea's Perestroika Succeed?," *Japan Focus*, October 2002 (translated from *Sekai*, November 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See February 2006 cabinet memo in response to a Diet question. Honshi Nicho mondai shusaihan, "Nimaishita gaiko ga 'kokueki' o sokonau," *Shukan kinyobi*, 3 March 2006, p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> Abe on 14 November 2002, quoted in Wada Haruki, "Rachi mondai no kosho o dakai suru michi," Nicho kokko sokushin kokumin kyokai, ed, *Do suru Nicho kokko kosho*, Sairyusha, 2003, pp. 22-29 at p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Park Ryon-Yon, Head of the North Korean Foreign Ministry's 4<sup>th</sup> Bureau, "Rachi o mitome, keizai kyoryoku hoshiki wo totta no wa 'keizai konnan' ni yoru joho de ha nai," *Shukan kinyobi*, 13 December 2002, pp. 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> For the most detailed study of the talks, Funabashi Yoichi, *Za peninsulara kueshon*, Tokyo, Asahi shimbunsha, 2006 (English edition as *The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Washington D.C., The Brookings Institution, 2007.)

<sup>16</sup> As of late 2003, about one quarter of all Diet members were members. James L. Schoff, *Political Fences and Bad Neighbors: North Korea Policy making in Japan and the Implications for the United States*, Cambridge, MA, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2006, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Schoff, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Sato Katsumi, *Rachi kazoku 'Kin Shojitsu to no araso' zenkyuseki*, Shogakukan bunko, 2002, pp. 206-8.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Wada, "Rachi mondai – kaiketsu e no michi," 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Takasaki, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive list of North Korea-related books published since 1984: Wada Haruki and Takasaki Shuji, eds., *Kita Chosen hon o do yomu ka*, Akashi shoten, 2003, pp. 198-233.

<sup>22</sup> Ota Osamu, "Hi-seiji teki tetsugakusha o yosou daibutsu bomeisha," Wada and Takasaki, eds., pp. 80-91, at p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Japanese media sources, especially editorials in *Asahi shimbun*, 13, 15, and 28 September 2003.

<sup>24</sup> "Kin soshoki wa atama no tenkai hayai hito," *Asahi shimbun*, 28 May 2004.

<sup>25</sup> "Rokusha kyogi – Beikoku mo ugoku toki da," *Asahi shimbun*, editorial, 22 June 2004.

<sup>26</sup> For the Japanese government's statement of 24 December, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/n\\_korea/abd/sai\\_chosa.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/n_korea/abd/sai_chosa.html) [accessed 15 October 2008].

- <sup>27</sup> Japanese government headquarters on the abduction issue, “Points of contention with the North Korean position,” <http://www.rachi.go.jp/en/mondaiten/index.html> (accessed 15 October 2008).
- <sup>28</sup> Wada Haruki, “Rachi mondai – kaiketsu e no michi,” *Bessatsu Sekai*, April 2007.
- <sup>29</sup> “Biboroku,” *Asabi shimbun*, 28 January 2005.
- <sup>30</sup> Japanese officials became even more skeptical about the suicide story when shown the tree in November 2004 and finding that its trunk was a mere 10 centimetres in diameter. (Japanese government’s “Points of Contention,” 24 December 2004, cit.)
- <sup>31</sup> For critical analysis of the discrepancies see “Points of Contention,” cit.
- <sup>32</sup> David Cyranoski, “DNA is burning issue in Japan and Korea clash over kidnaps,” *Nature*, vol. 433, 3 February 2005, p. 445.
- <sup>33</sup> Ishiyama Ikuo and Yoshii Tomio, *DNA Kantei nyumon*, Tokyo, Nanzando, 1998, p. 175.
- <sup>34</sup> “Politics versus reality,” *Nature*, vol. 434, 17 March 2005, pp. 257.
- <sup>35</sup> See the *Nature* editorial “Politics versus reality,” vol. 434, 17 March 2005, p. 257.
- <sup>36</sup> “Megumi-san ‘ikotsu’ de ronso,” *Asabi shimbun*, 10 May 2005.
- <sup>37</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, “Asia Letter: About a kidnap victim, DNA testing, and doubt,” *International Herald Tribune*, 2 June 2005.
- <sup>38</sup> David Cyranoski, “Geneticist’s new post could stop him testifying about DNA tests,” *Nature*, Vol. 437, 7 April 2005, p. 685.
- <sup>39</sup> Machimura, in response to a question in House of Representatives, 30 March 2005.
- <sup>40</sup> Ishiyama Ikuo, “Kasai saretā ikotsu no DNA kantei,” *Microscopia*, vol. 22, No. 2, June 2005, pp. 4-8.
- <sup>41</sup> As some (such as Wada Haruki) proposed, Wada Haruki, *Dojidai bihyo (2002 nen 9-gatsu -- 2005 nen 1-gatsu) Nicho kankei to rokusha kyogi*, Sairyusha, 2005, p. 48.
- <sup>42</sup> See the Song Il-ho interview with Wada Haruki et al in *Nicho kankei to rokusha kyogi*, pp.101-105.
- <sup>43</sup> Various statements by President Bush, Secretary of State Rice, and Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, January to May 2005.
- <sup>44</sup> *Asabi shimbun*, 22 June 2005.
- <sup>45</sup> Charles L. (Jack) Pritchard, “Six Party Talks Update: False Start or a Case for Optimism,” Conference on “The Changing Korean Peninsula and the Future of East Asia,” sponsored by the Brookings Institution and Joongang Ilbo, 1 December 2005, slightly different wording at Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of how North Korea got the Bomb*, Brookings Institution, 2007, p. 120.
- <sup>46</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 86.
- <sup>47</sup> North Korean Foreign Ministry Statement of 20 September 2005, *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. xxix, 3, Fall 2005, p. 458.
- <sup>48</sup> For fuller discussion of this shift, Gavan McCormack, “Criminal States: Soprano vs. Baritone – North Korea and the U.S.,” *Korea Observer*, Seoul, vol. 37, No. 3, Autumn 2006, pp. 487-511.
- <sup>49</sup> “U.S. says North Korea a criminal regime,” BBC News, 17 December 2005.
- <sup>50</sup> David L. Asher, “The North Korean criminal state, its ties to organized crime, and the possibility of WMD proliferation,” *Policy Forum Online*, No. 05-92A, [Nautilus Institute](http://www.nautilus.org), 15 November 2005.
- <sup>51</sup> Daniel Glaser, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, quoted in Josh Meyer and Barbara Demick, “N. Korea running counterfeit racket, says U.S.,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 December 2005.
- <sup>52</sup> In June 2006, it mobilized three aircraft carrier groups and conducted exercises, code-named “Valiant Shield,” in the waters around Guam, the largest military exercises (“war games”) since the Vietnam War, with North Korea the imagined target. Late in July followed a naval exercise, “Rimpac 2006,” which brought together units from South Korea, Japan (SDF), Australia, Canada, Chile, and Peru, as well as the U.S. itself. Even in “normal” times, seven U.S. Aegis destroyers were deployed on a regular basis at Japan’s Yokosuka, equipped with hundreds of 1,300 km Tomahawk missiles, enough to wipe out most of North Korea’s military and industrial installations and cities. (See Ogawa Kazuhiko, “Teki kichi kogeki-ron no yojisei,” *Shukan kinyobi*, 21 July 2006, pp. 18-19.)
- <sup>53</sup> Even after years of intense effort, the US was unable to persuade regional countries of its claims about a secret HEU program in North Korea. Like Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, it was crucial to the US case but difficult to prove. North Korea, for its part, could only deny, but not disprove. (Gavan McCormack, “The umbrella and the mushroom: realism and extremism on North Korea,” *Japan Focus*, 24 August 2005.)
- <sup>54</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 131.
- <sup>55</sup> “Japan’s preemptive strike plan lacks sense of history,” *Hankyoreh Online*, editorial, 12 July 2006.
- <sup>56</sup> “Poll: 92% support sanctions on N. Korea,” *Daily Yonmuri Online*, 8 July 2006.
- <sup>57</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 1695, 15 July 2006. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm>.
- <sup>58</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 1718, 14 October 2006. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8853.doc.htm>.
- <sup>59</sup> Bilateral trade of 120 billion yen in 1980 reduced to 27 billion yen in 2004, and halved just in the period 2002-2004. (Nicho kokko sokushin kokumin kyokai, pp. 51-55, and “Dokumento – Gekido no namboku Chosen,” *Sekai*, August 2006, pp. 266-73, at p. 273.). See also table in Schoff, p. 18.
- <sup>60</sup> “Japan to order more public media coverage of North Korea abductees,” *International Herald Tribune*, October 24, 2006.
- <sup>61</sup> Wada Haruki, “Abe rosen no hasan to shin Chosen seisaku,” *Sekai*, December 2007, pp. 88-96. passim (also at <http://wadaharuki.com/nicchou.html>) (16 October 2008).
- <sup>62</sup> Aoki Osamu, “Abe seiken ka, tai Chosen Soren atsuryoku seisaku no jittai,” *Sekai*, July 2008, pp. 153-165, at pp. 154-5.
- <sup>63</sup> “Chongryun,” Wikipedia, August 2008. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/chongryun>.
- <sup>64</sup> Fujita Yutaka, “Zainichi Korian no kodomotachi ni taisuru iyaragase jittai chosa,” *Sekai*, October 2003, pp. 248-254.
- <sup>65</sup> Schoff, p. 2.
- <sup>66</sup> Yamaguchi Masami, “Seiji danatsu ni te o kasu media,” *Shukan kinyobi*, 18 May 2007, p. 28.
- <sup>67</sup> Ishizaka Koichi et al, “Tai Kita Chosen ima koso daiwa ni ugoku toki,” *Sekai*, July 2008, pp. 122-135, at p. 139.
- <sup>68</sup> Larry Niksch and Raphael Perl, “North Korea: Terrorism List Removal?” CRS (Congressional Research Service), updated 1 December 2007, p. 8.
- <sup>69</sup> Niksch and Perl, p. 8; “U.S. delinks JAL hijackers, North Korea terror status,” *Japan Times*, 23 November 2007.
- <sup>70</sup> Larry Niksch, “Kita chosen tero shien kokka shitei kaijo,” *Mainichi shimbun*, 22 November 2007.
- <sup>71</sup> N. Maeda and N. Kurashige, “With U.S. shift, Abe’s N. Korea containment policy falls apart,” *Asabi Shimbun*, 15 February 2007.
- <sup>72</sup> “Keri moto Beikokumu jikanho rachi ‘Nihon wa kibishii ketsudan mo,’” *Asabi Shimbun*, 29 April 2007.

- <sup>73</sup> “North Korea may still be nuclear in 2020,” *The Hankyoreh*, 18 February 2007.
- <sup>74</sup> See Wada, “Abe rosen no hasan to shin Chosen seisaku,” *Sekai*, December 2007, pp. 88-96. p. 89.
- <sup>75</sup> Abe Shinzo, *Utsukushii kuni e*, Bunshun shnsho No. 524, Bungei shunjusha, 2006.
- <sup>76</sup> Abe Shinzo, quoted in ‘Shusho no doshi uttae tesaguri,’ *Asabi Shimbun*, 28 June 2007. See also Wada Haruki, “The North Korean nuclear problem, Japan, and the peace of Northeast Asia,” *Japan Focus*, 10 March 2007.
- <sup>77</sup> See my “Arc of Dependence: Japan, Australia and the Future of Asia,” Seoul, Northeast Asia History Foundation, “International Conference on East Asia from the Perspective of Center and Periphery,” 9-11 December 2007.
- <sup>78</sup> Funabashi Yoichi, “Beikoku kara no ‘jiritsu’ to ‘jisei,’” *Asabi shimbun*, 28 May 2007; see also “Kita Chosen ‘tero shien kokka’ kaijo,” *Asabi shimbun*, 12 May 2007.
- <sup>79</sup> For a brief account see “Criticism of Iraq war,” editorial, *Asabi Shimbun*, 8 February 2007.
- <sup>80</sup> Speaking on TV Asahi on 16 September, quoted in “Rokusha kyogi ridatsu mo,” *Asabi Shimbun*, 16 September 2007.
- <sup>81</sup> See also Niksch and Perl, cit.
- <sup>82</sup> For some references to this diplomatic effort: Nakayama Kyoko, quoted in Giles Campion, “Japan warns US over North Korea,” Agence France-Presse, 24 October 2007; Kurashige Nanae, Umehara Toshiya, “Shusho hobei nandai zukushi,” *Asahi shimbun*, 9 November 2007; “Fears abductee issue will fade in delist deal,” *Asahi shimbun*, 25 June 2008.
- <sup>83</sup> “Opinion: Japan Must Link Progress in Six Party Talks with Abduction Issue,” *Nihon Keizai shimbun*, 27 June 2008.
- <sup>84</sup> From the Washington-based “Nelson Report,” as quoted in Hamish McDonald, “Change of tack by Bush miffs Tokyo,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18-19 October 2008.
- <sup>85</sup> Reuters, “Japan criticizes US decision,” *The Independent*, 12 October 2008.
- <sup>86</sup> “Munashii’ Beikoku darashinai’ rachi higaisha kazoku ra shitsubo,” *Asabi shimbun*, 12 October 2008.
- <sup>87</sup> Sato Katsumi, “Tero shien kokka shitei kaijo no kyokun,” *Gendai Koria*, 14 October 2008. [http://gendaikorea.com/20081014\\_01\\_satou.aspx](http://gendaikorea.com/20081014_01_satou.aspx).
- <sup>88</sup> Nakanishi Terumasa, “Busshu no uragiri ni do mukuiru ka,” *Shokun*, September 2008, pp. 24-34.
- <sup>89</sup> Masahiro Matsumura, “America, Don’t Count on our Followership,” Association of Japanese Institutes of International Studies, Commentary No. 16, 4 December 2007. [http://www.jiia.or.jp/en\\_commentary/200712/04-1.html](http://www.jiia.or.jp/en_commentary/200712/04-1.html).
- <sup>90</sup> “Hill accepts Tokyo’s stance on N. Korea,” *Asabi shimbun*, 21 October 2008.
- <sup>91</sup> *Chosun Online*, 22 October 2008.
- <sup>92</sup> Details in “Japan in Bush’s World,” Chapter 4 of *Client State*.
- <sup>93</sup> Hasuie Toru, “Daiwa saikai no tame ni nani ga hitsuyo ka,” *Sekai*, July 2008, pp. 136-142. See Hasuie also interviewed on TV Asahi, 24 July 2008; in *Shukan kinyobi*, 19 September 2008, pp. 30-31, and a Kyoto talk entitled, “Families continually buffeted in the gap between two countries” he delivered to the inaugural meeting on 25 October 2008 of the “Citizen Network to Mark the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Japan’s Annexation of Korea.”
- <sup>94</sup> Ishizaka Koichi et al, cit, *Sekai*, July 2008, pp. 122-135. Their proposal includes a six-point plan for resolution of the abduction problem: (1) admission, apology, and pledge not to commit again; (2) clarification of fate of abductees and their whereabouts in case of survivors; (3) return and restitution of survivors and their families; (4) return of remains of deceased and provision for visits to graves in North Korea by families; (5) punishment of culprits; (6) compensation. Of these 1 and 3 are complete, 2 remains unsatisfactory, 4 is contested, 5 incomplete and 6 so far not even seriously discussed.
- <sup>95</sup> “Nicho kokko seijoka sokushin giin renmei,” headed by Yamasaki Taku and founded May 2008.
- <sup>96</sup> North Korean Foreign Ministry (Ri Byong-dok) to National Association for Normalization of Japan-North Korea Relations delegation (Wada Haruki and Kimiya Tadashi) visiting Pyongyang between 18 and 22 October 2008. Wada and Kimiya reporting to Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan, 28 October 2008.
- <sup>97</sup> “Obama to Submit Korean Free Trade Pact for Ratification in 2009,” *Yahoo Asia News*, 27 October 2008, <http://asia.news.yahoo.com/081026/4/3r1tr.html>.